



LEBANON

UMAYYAD ROUTE



Umayyad Route

Project funded by the EUROPEAN UNION

ENPI CBCMED
CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN

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Byblos

SAFADI FOUNDATION

LAU Lebanese American University

Lebanon. Umayyad Route

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Umayyad Project (ENPI)

The Umayyad Route seeks to publicize the profound human, cultural, artistic and scientific relationship between East and West and the way in which the Greco-Roman legacy was passed on to Europe through al-Andalus. This route was the path along which the Arabs came to the Iberian Peninsula and Europe, but it was also a channel for the transfer of knowledge and perfectly illustrates the close collaboration between the two Cultures. Of these multiple contacts the most important things to have survived the wear and tear of history are a common cultural and artistic background, a shared history and heritage. This is the raison d'être of these routes, which seek to forge links and strengthen the relations between the different peoples they encompass, united by a common past.

The Umayyad Route retraces part of the journey followed by the dynasty founded by Muawiya ibn Abi Sufian from its capital in Damascus and its subsequent expansion along the southern shores of the Mediterranean to the Iberian Peninsula. The route begins therefore in the Near East before heading off along the Mediterranean across North Africa. It follows the path by which Arabic civilization came to Europe and which gave rise to the Caliphate of Cordoba, where the Hispano-Muslim civilization flourished for several centuries. The itinerary starts at its easternmost point in Jordan and Lebanon, passing through Egypt and Tunisia, with a stopover in Sicily, and ends up in the Iberian Peninsula (Spain and Portugal).

Umayyad city
of Anjar

Lebanon

A country of sea, mountains and green valleys, the Republic of Lebanon has 223 kilometres of coastline running north-south along the eastern Mediterranean, and a varying width of 40 to 75 kilometres across to the Eastern border with Syria. The narrow flat coastline with a succession of towns and villages rises quickly into the Mount Lebanon massif, whose peaks, snow-covered in winter, climb up to 3,000 meters high. Its slopes are covered by the famous cedar tree, Lebanon's national symbol. Behind this first mountain chain lies the Bekaa valley, replete with orchards and vineyards, which is dominated to the east by the peaks of another mountain chain, the Anti-Lebanon Mountains.

This geographical accident of close proximity between the sea and the mountains greatly influenced the history of this corner of the Near East. The country's long Mediterranean façade has enabled exchanges between

Umayyad city of Anjar





Original cedars of Lebanon. Bsharri, Qadisha Valley

Orient and Occident since the times of the Phoenicians. Throughout history its mountains and valleys have served as a refuge for many religious minorities, which today make Lebanon a spiritual mosaic hosting five acknowledged branches of Islam (Sunnites, Shiites, Alaouites, Druzes and Ismailities) and eleven Christian confessions, the largest of which are the Maronites.

Around 2700 BC, the Canaanites, Semite tribes originating from Arabia and Mesopotamia, migrated towards what is today Syria and Lebanon. Some of them settled in pre-existing coastal settlements which developed into the main cities on the Lebanese coast: Sidon (Saida), Tyre (Sour), Berytus (Beirut), Aradus and Byblos (Jbeil). The Canaanites who inhabited the coastal cities were later known by the Greeks as Phoenicians. Their city-states became maritime empires and until 1200 BC they expanded their colo-

nies on the Mediterranean coasts and even beyond into the Atlantic, where they founded Gadir (Cadiz) for example. The objects manufactured by Phoenician craftsmen, with materials from different origins - gold, bronze, ivory, glass - indicate an eclectic approach to design, encompassing countless influences, as can be seen in the magnificent pieces on display in the National Museum of Beirut. Its collections illustrate the long history of a country that was successively invaded by several regional powers, including the Egyptians, Hyksos, Hittites, Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans.

Alexander the Great's conquest of various coastal Phoenician cities around 333 BC culminated with the famous siege of Tyre, which brought the Eastern Mediterranean within the Hellenistic cultural sphere. The Pax Romana between 64 BC and the end of the fourth century AD brought an economic and cultural boom to these cities that left permanent traces in various corners of the country. The temples of Bacchus (still in excel-

Temple of Jupiter, Baalbek



lent condition), Venus and Jupiter in Baalbek are in the heart of the fertile meadows of the Bekaa Valley. Tyre, in the south of the country, has an impressive ensemble of Roman remains: a stadium, a gymnasium, thermal baths and a spectacular hippodrome, the tiers of which still survive, along with an obelisk to mark the place where the chariots had to turn. A Byzantine arch nearby reminds us that the country was also, for centuries, a province of the Byzantine Empire.

Phoenicia by Ammianus Marcelinus, 4th century AD

"After Syria we come to Phoenicia which slopes up to Mount Lebanon, a region full of charm and beauty, adorned by great and beautiful cities among which Tyre, Sidon and Beirut stand out due to their attractiveness and their famous names, as do Emesa and Damascus founded in ancient times."

The Beqaa Valley in 1784, according to Comte Volney

"The Beqaa Valley is the ancient *Coele-Syria* or *Deep Syria*. Its position in a deep trough into which the mountain waters flow has made it one of the most fertile valleys in Syria; it also receives copious amounts of sunshine and in the summer the heat is no less than that of Egypt. The air nonetheless is not unhealthy there, undoubtedly because it is constantly renewed by the North wind and because the waters are full of life and not stagnant. People sleep on the terraces there with impunity."



Umayyad city of Anjar

The second half of the sixth century was marked by an economic crisis caused by natural disasters including the earthquake in the year 551 AD, which destroyed many of the monuments in Beirut, including the famous Law School.

The subsequent decline of the coastal cities was followed by the Muslim conquest in 634 AD and the formation of the first Muslim dynasty, the Umayyad dynasty, under whom these cities became part of the rapidly expanding Muslim empire and Arabic became the language of the region.

In the Umayyad period, which lasted to the middle of the eighth century, international trade was revitalized, Egyptian linen was exported to Byzantium and to Europe. Spices and silk from India crossed the young Muslim empire to faraway destinations and Egypt was the foremost supplier of gold, used mainly for minting coins.

Lebanese ports continued to play an essential role in the Mediterranean, and their hinterland was criss-crossed by important routes in various directions. The Bekaa valley was also closely linked with Damascus, the Umayyad capital.

The size and strategic location of Baalbek in the northern Bekaa made it an important prosperous city in this period, when a large mosque was built, and the city of Anjar was constructed nearby during the reign of the Caliph al-Walid Bin Abd al-Malik (r. 705-715 AD). The site overlooks vast plains, which have been an essential source of food since Roman times.

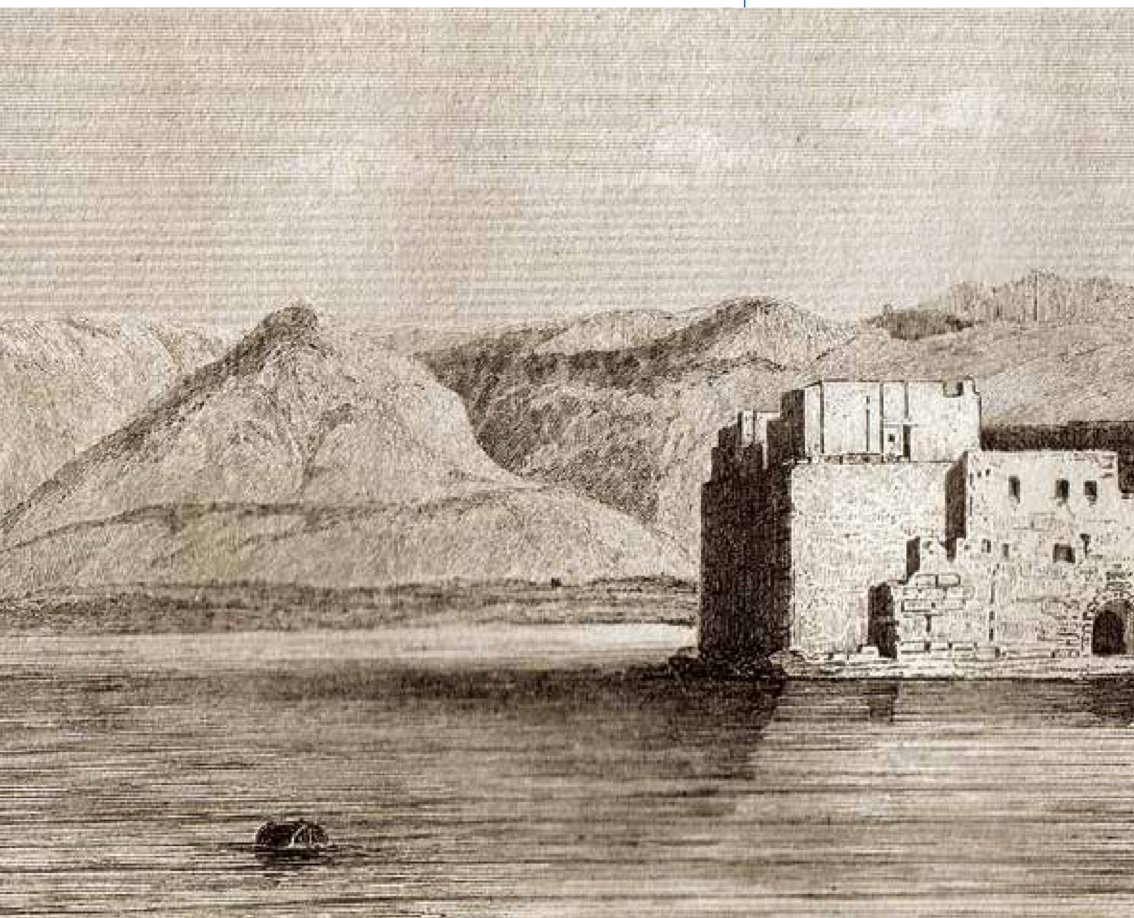
Between the eleventh and thirteenth century, the Crusades left their mark on the coastal landscape, especially in terms of military architecture. The Franks built mighty castles in various Syrian and Lebanese coastal cities and in the mountains nearby, including the fortresses at Sidon, Tyre, Byblos, Batroun and Tripoli (Castle of St. Gilles).

Tyre.
Archaeological site



The Mamluks, who ruled Egypt and Syria, drove the last of the Crusaders out of the Levant at the end of the thirteenth century. The city of Tripoli attracted them particularly because of its strategic location. Reconstruction of the city started in the late thirteenth century, and it gradually acquired the appearance of a typical Middle Eastern city with its markets (souks), mosques, khans and public baths.

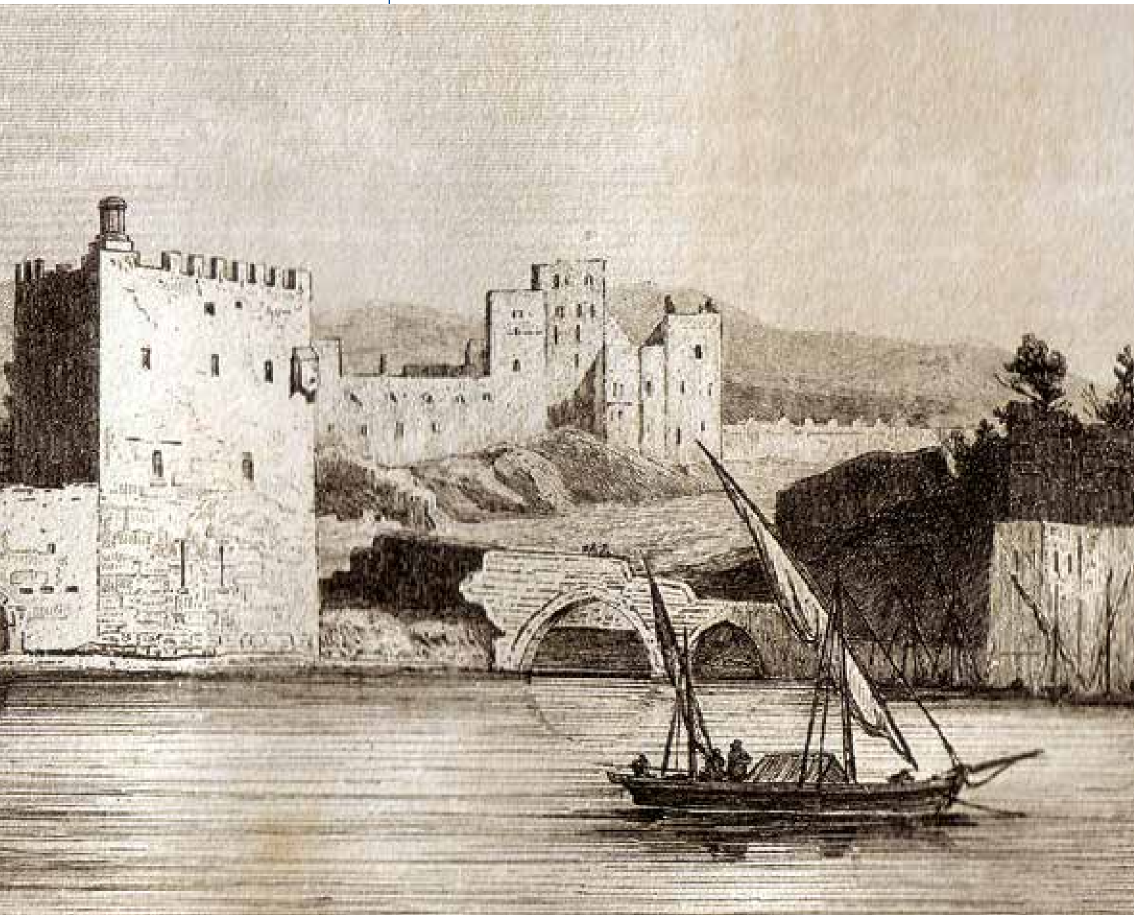
During the four centuries in which Lebanon formed part of the Ottoman Empire (1521-1918), prominent local feudal families (Maan, Shehab,...) vied for power, establishing their capitals first in Deir al-Qamar, and later in Beiteddine in the southern part of the western mountains. The Beiteddine Palace, constructed at the



Beirut in 1848.
Engraving by Lemaître

end of the 17th century by Amir Bashir Shehab, is a magnificent building that attests to the wealth and power of the family, with its courtyards and fountains, its reception halls and richly decorated private apartments.

Lebanon as we know it today within its current boundaries was formed during the French Mandate (1918-1943). The Mandate left distinctive marks on the cultural and political life of the newly formed country. Beirut became the capital city. The old town was demolished and a new city centre was constructed along several axes that came together in a large piazza, La Place de L'Etoile.



Route of the Umayyads in Lebanon

The Umayyad route in Lebanon takes the visitor on a journey from the port cities that connected the eastern Mediterranean with the rest of the world and to the interior of the country and the Umayyad city of Anjar. Coastal Lebanese cities had been the link between the two worlds from the second millennium BC. The archaeological and architectural remains discovered in these cities attest to the succession of civilizations that arose and prospered on the shores of the Mediterranean. They display the wealth of cultural and trading exchange in this Mare Nostrum ever since the Phoenicians first sailed out towards the shores of Europe and North Africa. These coastal cities are supplemented by Anjar, built by the Umayyads themselves during the first half of the eighth century.

The route offers a wonderful intensive course in the history of the different civilizations, enabling direct and

Byblos





Anjar

immediate comparison between all the architectural and cultural legacies left behind by each one.

Fragments of the urban fabrics of various periods still exist today, showing pluralistic cultural traits that marked many aspects of daily life in these cities, including food, their relationship with the natural environment and the multitude of diverse landscapes.

The Route of the Umayyads links Lebanon's historic coastal cities (Tripoli, Byblos, Beirut, Sidon and Tyre) together and joins them to their hinterland. From Beirut one would drive east to the Bekaa Valley and the Umayyad city of Anjar and to nearby Baalbek, which has an Umayyad mosque. The scenery along the coastal route is pretty with beaches, towns and villages on the western side of the road, and an array of mountains and hills on the east. The mountains seem higher in the northern part of the route between Tripoli, Byblos



Amiq

and Beirut, than between Beirut and Tyre in the south, where green hills abound.

The route from Beirut to Anjar crosses the Western Lebanese Mountains with winding roads and picturesque greenery until you reach the Dahr al-Baydar, where the landscape changes dramatically and the large and colourful Bekaa Valley spreads out below you from north to south. It is reminiscent of many fertile plains around the Mediterranean, although the eastern mountains give it a wonderful romantic aura. There is a strong contrast between the fertile valley and the arid mountains. It is here in Anjar that the Umayyads chose to build one of their first cities in the eastern Mediterranean, together with others in Syria, Jordan and the West Bank. Alongside the Umayyad city stands its modern counterpart, which is mostly inhabited by

Armenians who migrated from Cilicia in Turkey in the aftermath of the First World War. A small river runs among thickets and trees with several restaurants along its banks. The valley was considered precious even before the Umayyad period. To the north stand the remains of the Roman city of Baalbek (Heliopolis) with its large temple precinct, which includes grand courtyards, the almost intact Temple of Bacchus and the remains of the temples of Jupiter and Venus.

The coastal cities on the Umayyad route in Lebanon were all established in the period when the Phoenicians began to explore the Mediterranean. They all fell to Alexander the Great and their relationship with their immediate neighbours in the Mediterranean became stronger in the ensuing Hellenistic and Roman periods. When the Umayyad Caliphate was established, they tried to use some of these coastal centres as launch pads for conquering Cyprus. These attempts abated in the 8th century AD. Nevertheless, subsequent rulers such as the Fatimids, the Ayyubids, the Mamluks and the Ottomans used these ports to access the rest of the

Roman temple in Niha
(Bekaa valley)





Taynal mosque, Tripoli

Mediterranean, in times of both war and peace, and they became busy trading centres. Different rulers favoured different cities causing them to develop somewhat unevenly. In Tripoli for example, an important military and commercial port in the late medieval period, there is a predominance of Mamluk buildings. In Byblos by contrast many Phoenician, Roman and Ottoman artefacts have been discovered, the periods in which it was a busy port city. Beirut, whose pre-Ottoman monuments have all been lost, combines an Ottoman aura with the particular personality imposed during the French Mandate. Sidon lay dormant for centuries after the Hellenistic era before resurging in the late Ottoman Period, due to its trading relationship with the western Mediterranean. A prominent Ottoman Khan, the Khan el-Franj (the Europeans) dominated



Beirut

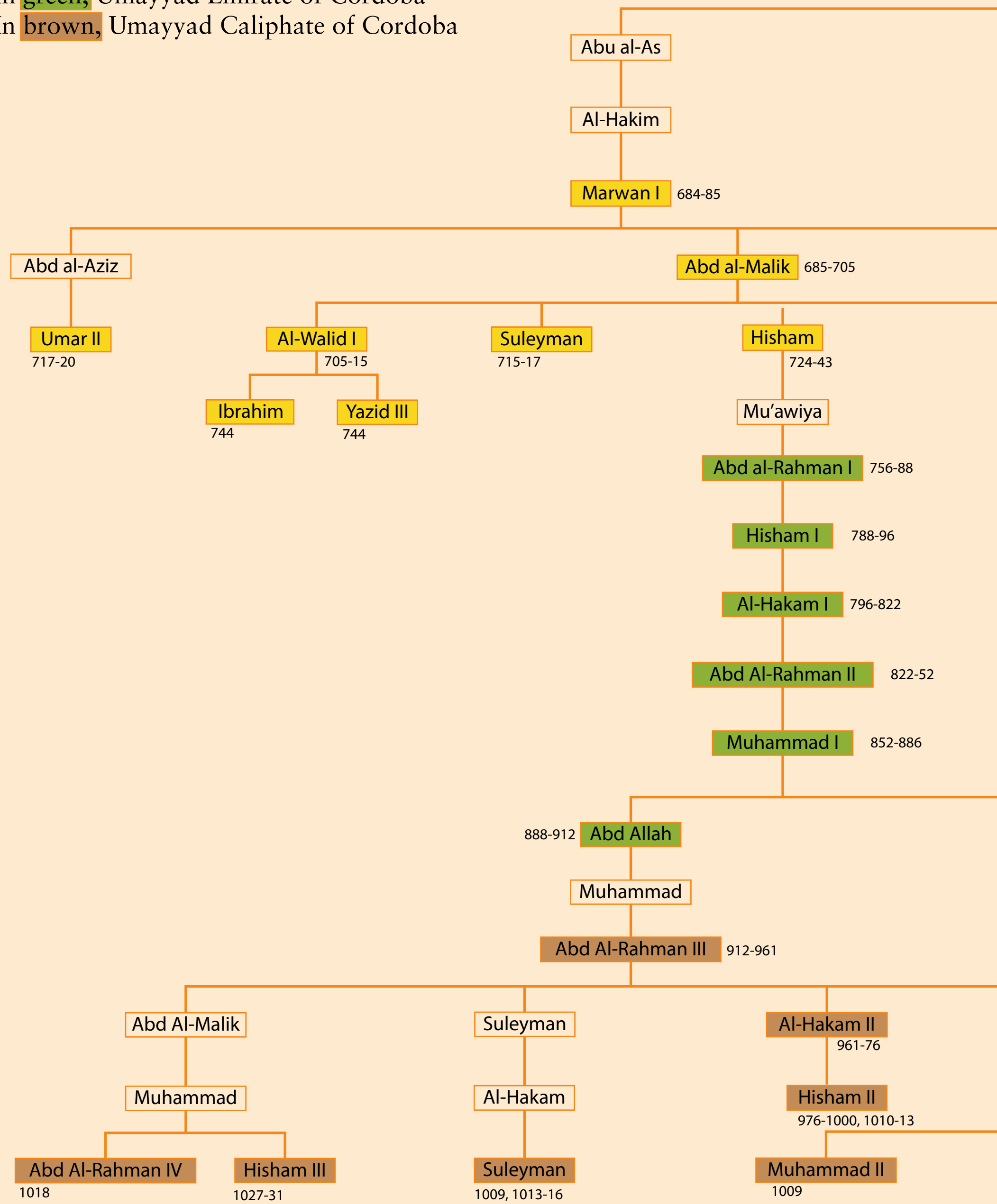
the seascape overlooking the ancient citadel of the city, while in Tyre, a minor city in the Ottoman period, the memories of the Hellenistic and Roman period remain prominently visible.

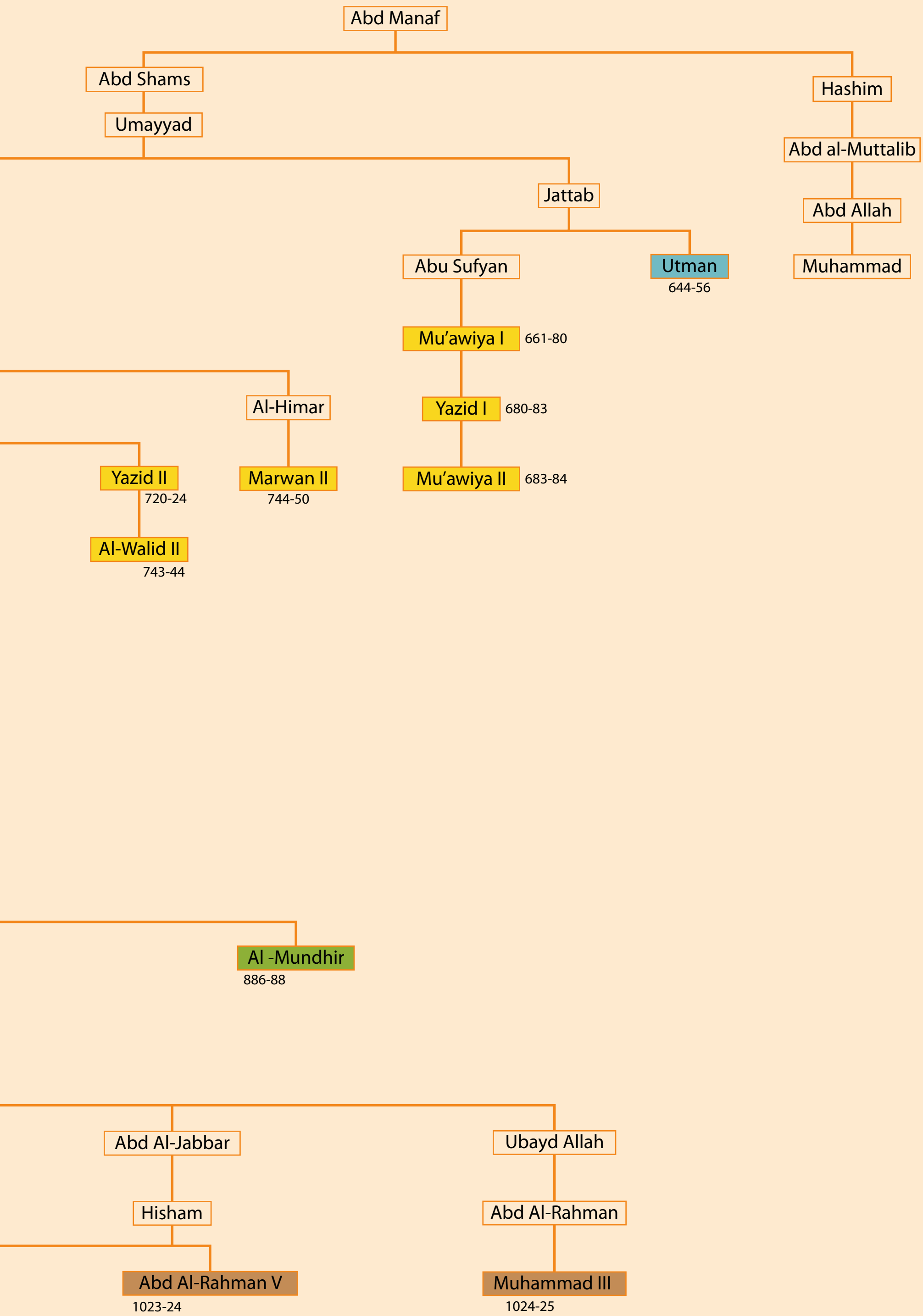
The French Mandate introduced urban design to Lebanese cities, sweeping aside many of their historic monuments. The new buildings underlined the “Arab” identity of these cities, which were also clearly influenced by late 19th century French and Italian architecture.

A major characteristic of these cities is their close relationship with inland regions of the eastern Mediterranean. The route between Damascus and Beirut has been an active artery for trade and culture throughout history.

Family Tree of the Umayyad Dynasty

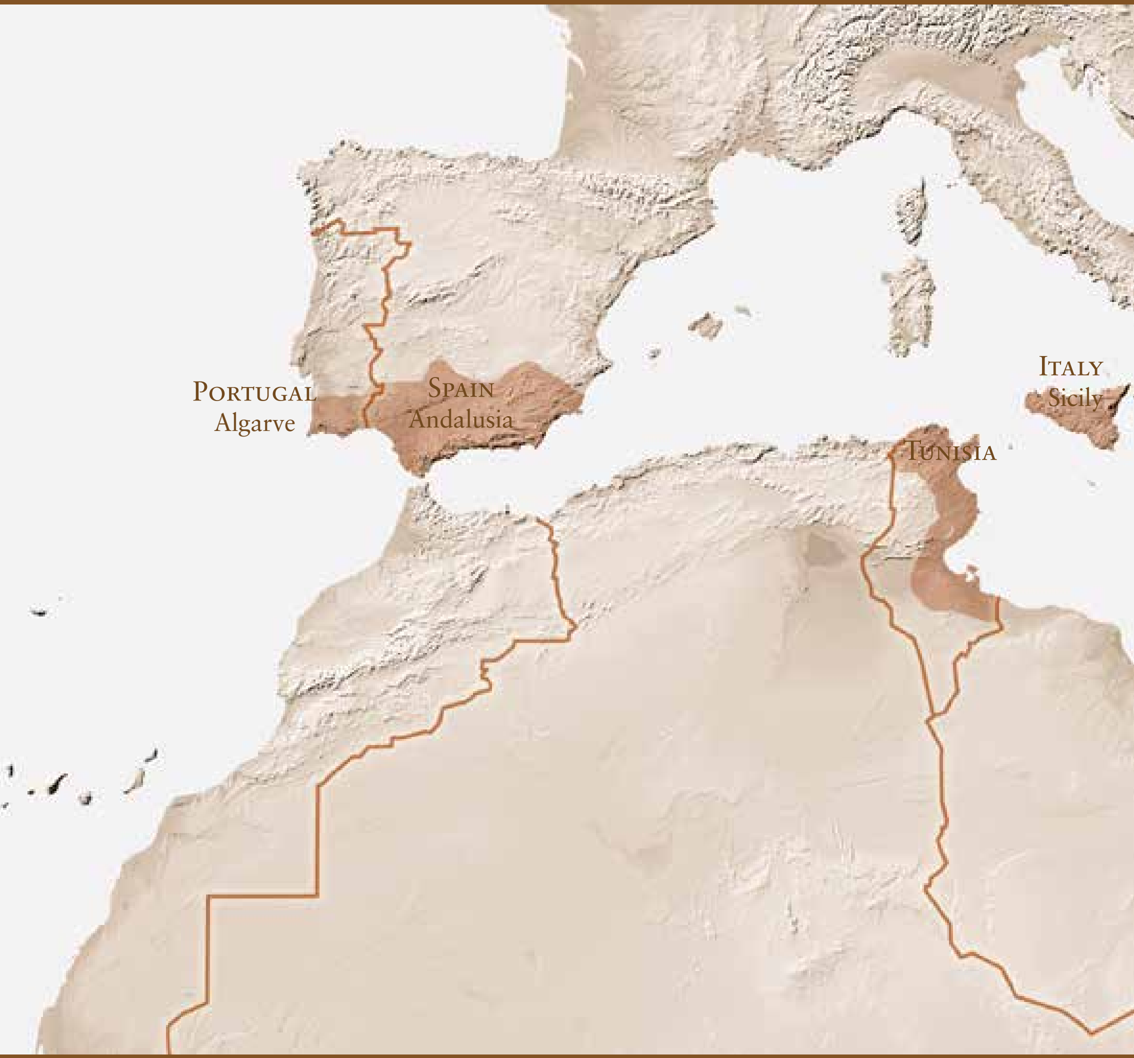
In yellow, Eastern Umayyad Caliphate
In green, Umayyad Emirate of Cordoba
In brown, Umayyad Caliphate of Cordoba

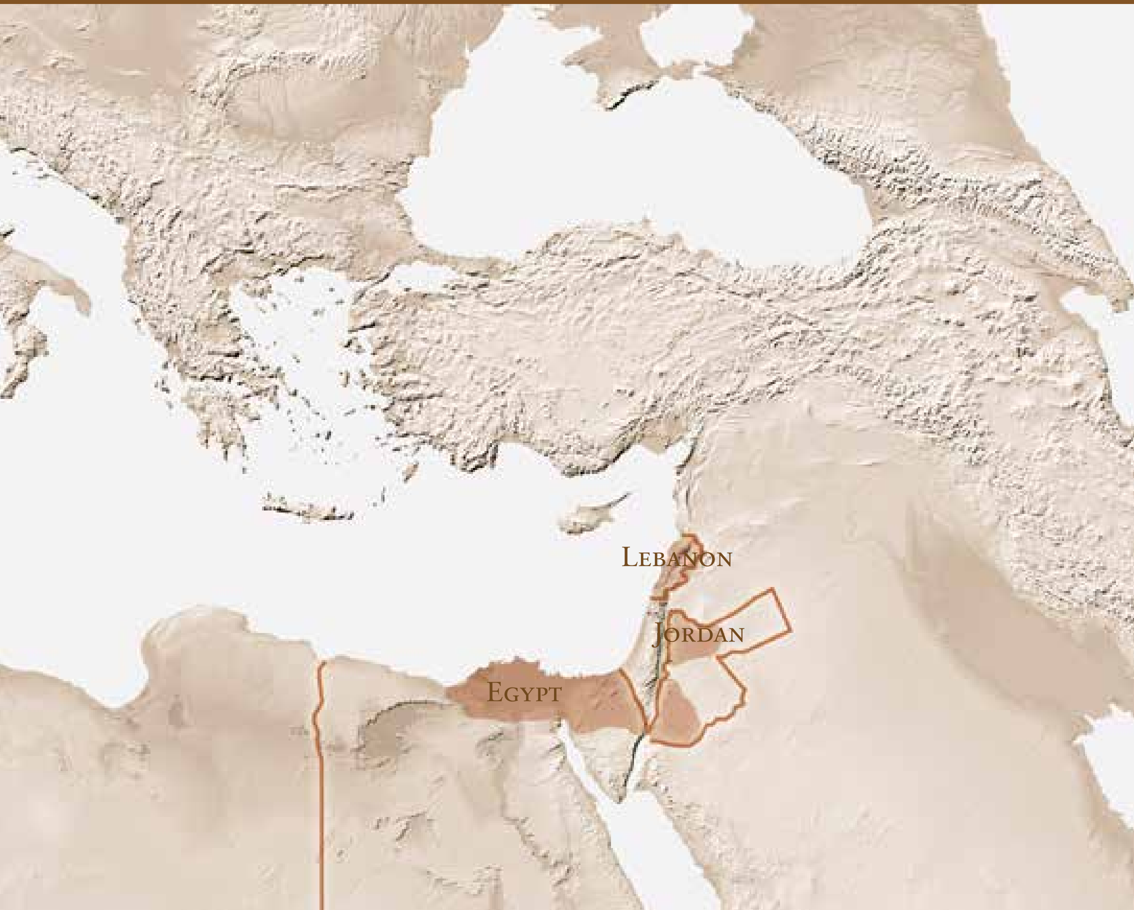




Abd Manaf
Abd Shams
Umayyad
Hashim
Abd al-Muttalib
Abd Allah
Muhammad
Jattab
Abu Sufyan
Utman
644-56
Mu'awiya I
661-80
Al-Himar
Yazid I
680-83
Yazid II
720-24
Marwan II
744-50
Mu'awiya II
683-84
Al-Walid II
743-44
Al -Mundhir
886-88
Abd Al-Jabbar
Ubayd Allah
Hisham
Abd Al-Rahman
Abd Al-Rahman V
1023-24
Muhammad III
1024-25

Umayyad Route




Lebanon
Jordan
Egypt


















The Umayyad Route in Lebanon



Umayyad and Modern Arab Food

Umayyad and Modern Arab Food

There are a wide variety of Arab dishes to satisfy the palette of every gourmet. Many modern dishes date back to early Islam when the most famous dish was *Tharid*, a favourite of the Prophet. In its simplest form, *Tharid* is bread crumbs soaked with meat broth, and is eaten with the hand. Many different recipes have been suggested over the years including some from the Umayyad era.Rather than going into detailed recipes of Umayyad or contemporary Abbasid food, it would perhaps be better to describe the general characteristics of recipes from these periods, noting that many of the sweet and sour dishes are no longer cooked in the Arab World. Today sugar sweetened meats are most popular in the Maghreb countries of Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria. Here are some common ingredients of Umayyad dishes:

Potato and walnut kebbe





A cake dessert made with fine semolina, turmeric, oil and sugar

a. Meat, especially lamb, goat, chicken and fish was the main protein source in the Umayyad diet.

b. Meat was often prepared in sweet and sour recipes. Honey, sugar, and fruit, both dried and fresh, were used generously to enhance the taste. Common examples were oranges, figs, dates, pomegranates, raisins and apricots. Lemon juice was also used.

c. Various spices were also used.

d. Copious amounts of nuts were also added to main dishes. In particular almonds, pistachios, pine nuts and occasionally hazelnuts were used to impart a delicious taste. This was also the case for desserts.

e. There were many sweet dishes in this period. Honeyed pastries and dates with almonds were very common. Sugar syrup perfumed with rose water or *Ma' Zahr* (lemon blossom extract) was often used as a substitute for honey. One example, Lauzeenaj, is the precursor of modern Baklawa (a fine-leaved pastry with pistachio filling and sugar syrup). Milk and rice puddings were also eaten with honey.

These three books offer an interesting history of Umayyad and Abbasid food and a wide selection of recipes:

a. Lilia Zaouali, *Medieval Cuisine of the Islamic World. A Concise History with 174 Recipes*, Berkeley and LA, University of California Press, 2007.

b. Nawal Nasrallah, *Delights from the Garden of Eden: A Cookbook and History of the Iraqi Cuisine*, Sheffield, Equinox Publishing Ltd., 2013.

c. David Waines, *In a Caliph's Kitchen, Medieval Arabic Cooking for the Modern Gourmet*, London, Riad El Rayyes Books Ltd., 1989.



Fresh goat cheese in jars and traditional house in Baalbeck







Green beans with tomatoes stirfried with oil and garlic; and fruit salad with jar of rose water syrup

The above references could be supplemented with others dealing with Eastern Mediterranean cuisine, which has developed over several millennia as a result of experimental fusion in the gastronomy of all the different cultures from the Roman period until today.



Pumpkin kebbe

Itinerary

UMMAYAD ROUTE

Beirut *(Bayrout)*



1. Al-Omari mosque
2. St. George's Maronite Cathedral
3. St. George's Greek Orthodox Cathedral
4. Grand Serail (Governmental Palace)
5. Amir Assaf Mosque
6. Mohammad al-Amim Mosque
7. National Museum
8. Hippodrome
9. University of St. Joseph

Beirut is the capital of Lebanon and its largest city. It is located on a cape in the middle of the country's Mediterranean coast.

It is a vibrant city with many historic and contemporary attractions. It is said that from its harbour the first Umayyad caliph, Muawiya, launched his campaign against Cyprus in the seventh century. This legend is commemorated in a famous painting by Lebanese artist Moustafa Farroukh, in which he depicts Muawiya overseeing the naval fleet constructed for him by the people of Beirut.

Beirut was a major centre for many of the cultures that ruled the eastern Mediterranean. It was an important Roman city in the 3rd century AD and there are many Roman sites in the city centre including the Main Street, hippodrome, temples and baths. Its grandeur continued in the Byzantine period, when a famous law school was built. In the 6th century AD this came to an abrupt end

Beirut





Grand Serail (government palace)

when Beirut was destroyed by an earthquake, although the city centre was gradually rebuilt over the remains of the Roman and Byzantine buildings.

The National Museum in Beirut houses many archaeological objects from the Neolithic Age to the Mamluk period in the 15th century.

After centuries in the shadows Beirut resurged in the 19th century, when the Ottomans made it an independent district and expanded its harbour, which later became the most important port on the eastern Mediterranean coast.

Pigeon rocks, Beirut





Roman baths

The city we know today began to appear in the late Ottoman Empire with a modernization policy in which several monumental buildings and public squares were constructed. This continued during the French Mandate and after independence in 1943. The city centre, which was severely damaged in the Civil War in 1975, was restored in the late 1990's. It is now a hub for retail outlets and entertainment venues, as well as for governmental buildings, historic churches and mosques.

The city grew fast, expanding in several directions. Its buildings are in various architectural styles including late 19th century French and Italian empire style, Ottoman Islamic revival in the early 20th century, early

reinforced concrete buildings, art deco and modernist designs, and more recently a surge of contemporary architecture.

The city is a vibrant metropolis with several historic sites and cultural outlets, as well as an active night-life in various locations, such as the downtown, Gemmayzeh and Hamra Street areas.

Beirut is a port city par excellence. It has a wonderful promenade called al-Corniche running along the sea-front that is full of new hotels and restaurants. It is an excellent place for a stroll along the shore and extends for several kilometres along the perimeter of the cape.

Zawiyat Ibn Iraq



Visits

The city has various interesting routes for those wishing to admire its ancient monuments, especially the one that starts at the Grand Serail (the Offices of the Prime Minister), an Ottoman military barracks in late 19th century French style. It then heads downhill past the remains of a Roman bath towards the centre of the city.

Al-Umari mosque



Al-Umari mosque

This mosque is in the old city, close to the rebuilt Souk (market) and the Parliament building. It has been the city's main mosque since the fourteenth century. It was constructed on the site of the Crusader church of Saint John the Baptist, which was built in the 12th century as the Cathedral of the Latin Bishop, Baldwin of Boulogne.

Many of the mosque's architectural features are from the original church, including its foundations, and the apse on its eastern side, which is clearly visible from the outside. The mosque was renovated and expanded in the early 1990s. It has an arcade overlooking the main street on its western side, which may have been the narthex of the church. The stonework on the interior shows Crusader construction methods with large dressed stone. The interior layout was altered to accommodate the *mihrab* (direction of Mecca) on the southern side of the mosque.

The original building has a basilica floor-plan. The nave is roofed with a pointed tunnel vault, and the aisles with cross vaults with transverse pointed and moulded arches.

In various places there are decorations added to the Mosque by the Ottomans. The modern extension conjures up abstract Islamic geometrical patterns on a long façade on the northern side of the mosque overlooking the Rue Weygand, a shopping street which runs from the port to the city's main Souk, redesigned by the famous Spanish architect Rafael Moneo.

The mosque features a shrine to the Prophet Yahya, which contains his relics. Yahya is the equivalent in the Quran of St. John the Baptist in the New Testament.

There are other mosques and cathedrals nearby in varying styles that are also worth visiting. These include:

Amir Assaf Mosque (16th century), Mohammad al-Amin Mosque (2007), St. George's Maronite Cathedral (1894, modeled after Santa Maria Maggiore in Rome), St. George's Greek Orthodox Cathedral; the Parliament building (1932) and the Grand Serail, an Ottoman military barracks constructed in the late 19th century, which is now the seat of the Prime Minister of Lebanon. It overlooks Riad Solh Square and the remains of Beirut's Roman baths.

Visit of Ibn Battuta to Beirut in 1325

"We went on from there [Tiberias] to Bayrut, a small town with fine markets and a beautiful mosque. Fruit and iron are exported from it to Egypt."

Mohammad al-Amin Mosque



National Museum

Although the Lebanon National Museum, located in the Mathaf area (literally museum), is of modest size, it has a wonderfully concise and informative collection of artifacts from the different historical periods and regions of Lebanon. The building, which was designed by Egyptian-Lebanese architect Selim Nahhas, is a good example of eclectic revival style. Its porch resembles that of a typical Ancient Egyptian temple. It is constructed with stone and was restored in the 1990's. It has three floors of galleries in which Phoenician, Ancient Egyptian, Greek, Roman and Persian objects and sculptures are displayed. The walls are adorned with an excellent collection of Roman and Byzantine mosaics.

National Museum







“Eolipile” vessel and “Gourd” conserved in the National Museum of Beirut.

Near the museum there are some remarkable works of architecture including the Pine Palace, the residence of the French Ambassador, which was the seat of the Governor of Lebanon during the French Mandate. There is also the modern hippodrome and the University of St. Joseph, a post-modernist building.

Beirut in 1816 as described by J.S. Buckingham

“This town is seated on the northern edge of a tongue of land which extends itself in a plain towards the sea, from the foot of the mountains, in nearly a western direction, about five or six miles. Its site is, however, on a rising ground, ascending gently from the sea, so as to make its situation dry and healthy, and contribute much to the cleanliness of its interior.

[...] The town itself is of an irregular square form, walled on three sides toward the land, and open toward the sea. The walls are perfectly Turkish in their style and execution, and would offer but a feeble resistance to artillery. The whole is not more than a mile in circuit, yet it is thought to contain from 7,000 to 8,000 inhabitants, about the half of whom are Christians of different sects, and the other half Moslems. [...] There is an old castle near the sea, in which are six pieces of cannon, which form all the ordnance of the town; and in this castle the military reside. There is also a ruined tower, called Boorjee-el-Bahr, built on a rock in the sea, and near the common landing place, as well as some few round towers, of little strength in the walls of the town themselves. [...] These are some of the remains of the ancient magnificence of Bairoot, once decorating the porticos of temples and palaces, and now presenting a striking picture of the changes to which all things are subject, as seen wound round by the cables and hawsers of a few place them small trading boats.

The bazars, the streets, the dwelling-houses, and magazines of the town are better built than any of those which I had yet seen along the coast; the streets are sufficiently wide for all the purposes of passage and comfort where carriages are not used, and are all paved with large stones; the bazars are well furnished with the manufactures of the country and of Europe, as well as with all kinds of provisions; the dwelling-houses are lofty, spacious, and well-built, and some of the



Al-Omari Mosque, and roman vestiges of Beirut





Church St Louis of the Capuchins

magazines near the sea-shore are equal to those found in similar sea-ports of England itself.

There are within the town three mosques, with their courts, fountains, and minarets, the latter of a mean form. The Christian churches are four in number, one belonging to the Schismatic Greeks, another to the Catholic Greeks, a third to the Arab Catholics, and a fourth to the Maronites.

[...] In every direction are to be seen vestiges of the former magnificence of this place when a Roman city. There are three fine grey granite columns still standing, and apparently occupying their original place near to the southern wall of the town, others are scattered up and down in various directions, and remains of ancient buildings are constantly found wherever excavations are made; so that the present town may have been built, as has been conjectured, chiefly on the ruins of the old. Within the town is still seen, near one of the public fountains, a fine sarcophagus, partly broken; on the exterior sides and ends of which are sculptured, in high relief, a bull's head, and wreaths; and at the angle of each corner a ram's head, like that of the sphinxes at Thebes, or of the Jupiter Ammon of Egypt, exceedingly well wrought."



Jeita grotto

Surroundings

Jeita

The Jeita grotto, about 20 km from Beirut, was a finalist in the New 7 Wonders of Nature competition. You can visit two karstic limestone caves spanning an overall length of nearly 9 kilometers. The galleries are composed of a series of chambers, the largest of which peaks at a height of 120 meters (390 feet).

Emir Bachir Palace, Beiteddine.





Beiteddine

Deir el Qamar and Beiteddine

Situated about 40 km south of Beirut, **Deir El Qamar** has been a UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1995. The small town has cobbled streets bordered by typical Lebanese houses. The historical monuments to visit are:

- The Mamluk style Fakhreddine I Mosque
- The Youssef Chehab Palace/Serail
- The Kharj Barracks: Now the French Cultural Center
- The Palace of Fakhreddine II Maan: built in the form of a khan with a central courtyard surrounded by rooms







Beiteddine

- Synagogue: On the roof of one of the wings of the Fakhreddine II Palace, stands what was once the most important and the oldest - synagogue in the Middle-East, built in the 17th century

- Saydet al Talle: built in the 15th century on the site of an earlier Byzantine church, which was previously a temple dedicated to the goddess Astarte.





Beiteddine

In **Beiteddine** is located the Emir Bachir Palace: Commissioned by Emir Bachir Chehab, the palace boasts Italian Baroque, traditional Arab and typical 19th century architectural styles.

Beiteddine



Gastronomy and Handicraft

Beirut has many restaurants, bars and cafes with excellent local and international cuisine. It is also known for its vibrant nightlife with a host of restaurants, bars, pubs and clubs clustered mainly in the Hamra, Gemmayzeh, Mar Mikhael and Badaro neighborhoods.

Traditional Lebanese cuisine is known for its *mezze*, a myriad of small dishes that are served as tapas before the main meal. Beirut also has a considerable Armenian community and offers a range of high quality Armenian restaurants.

Many craft shops are spread around the city, above all in the Hamra district and the Ain el Mraisseh area by the sea where crafts and artisans from all over Lebanon display their wares.

The Corniche, Beirut



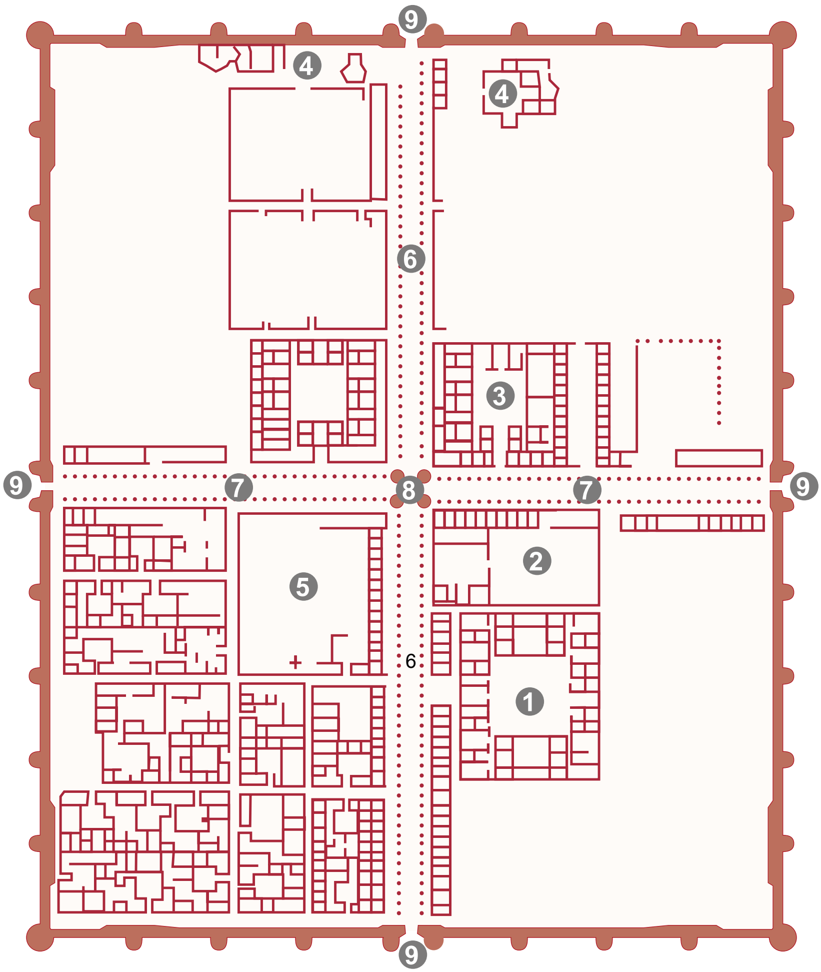


Beiteddine Festival

Festivals

There are various kinds of festivals in Beirut. Many of them are held in the summer, especially in and around Hamra Street, a well known shopping and nightlife area. The capital of Lebanon is a busy city with events and festivals, including: Beirut International Film Festival (October), Lebanese Rock Festival (October), Vinifest (October), Beirut International Jazz Festival (July), Festival du Cinéma Francophone (March/April), Beirut Spring Festival (May), Beirut Cooking Festival (November), Salon du Livre Francophone de Beyrouth, Beirut Design Week (June), Beirut Art Fair (September) and Beirut Book Fair (November).

Anjar



1. Palace
2. Mosque
3. Second Palace
4. Public baths and mosque
5. Residencial Area
6. *Kardus Maximus*
7. *Decumanus Maximus*
8. *Tetrastyle*
9. Fortifications



Located 58 kilometers east of Beirut, Anjar, a World Heritage Site, was built by the Umayyads in the first half of the 8th century, along with other palatial cities in Syria, Jordan and Palestine. The original layout of the city is well preserved and shows that Islamic city planning was strongly influenced by the Romans and Byzantines.

The ruins tell us a lot about construction methods in late antiquity. Scattered ornaments from the period are visible on many standing walls. It has a *decumanus* and a *cardo* that meet in the centre of the city. There is a well-preserved throne room in a basilica on the north-eastern side of the city. Anjar's 7-metre high ramparts testify to its former glory.

Overall view looking north, Anjar





The market arcades seen from the south-east

Like the other Umayyad cities, it is in the midst of some of the richest agricultural land in Lebanon and there are about 500 orchards in and around Anjar. It is located on the natural route between the Bekaa Valley and Damascus. The city was abandoned after the Umayyad period and has never been inhabited since.

Spring is a great time to visit as the trees are in flower, dotting the landscape with white and pink. Autumn is also a good time to come, especially if you like fruit picking and tasting.

A new town has emerged next to the original Umayyad city. Its inhabitants are Armenians who migrated from Cilicia in Turkey in the early 20th century.



Anjar's tetrastyle on the crossing between the *decumanus* and the *cardo*

Anjar is a great food destination with many restaurants boasting a mix of Lebanese and Armenian flavors and numerous locals who produce their own not-to-be-missed home-made preserves, a great gift to buy and take home with you.

Anjar famous arcades of the first palace, reconstructed in the 1930's



Visits

Umayyad city of Anjar

Anjar was founded by Caliph Walid Ibn ‘Abd al-Malik around 705 AD, although other sources attribute its construction to his son, Ibrahim. Either way, the Umayyads built it and turned it into an important inland commercial centre with links to Damascus, Homs, Baalbek and Tiberias. It shone for only 20-30 years, after which the Abbasids took over the empire and overran the city. Anjar offers a great example of the architectural mix between the Roman-Byzantine and Islamic styles, as shown in the construction techniques and decorations used in its monuments. The site was first investigated just after Lebanon’s independence (1940’s) when it was still covered by swamps. They drained the swamps, planted cypress and eucalyptus trees, excavated most of the site and restored some of its monuments.



An aerial view of the site

The remains of the palace





View toward the main street

The Umayyad city of Anjar covers an area of approximately 114,000 square meters. It is enclosed by a 2-meter thick wall with three stairways built on each interior wall to allow access to the top. The walls are fortified by 40 towers, spread across a rectangular area. The site is divided into four equal quadrants by avenues running north-south and east-west, as in earlier Roman planning. The Great Palace and the Mosque are



The main street seen from the porticos



Construction methods of alternating courses of stones and backed brick at Anjar

located in the southeast quarter on the highest part of the site; the residential area was in the southwest quarter along with the services and crafts areas; the Little Palace and another residential area are in the northwest quarter; and a third Palace and public bath are in the northeast quarter. There is a sewage collection system underneath the city. The baths are laid out exactly like Roman baths with a large changing room, two warm rooms and two hot rooms. To the left of the main road are the remains of the little palace. If you look carefully you might spot some intricate Byzantine-inspired engravings of owls, eagles, seashells and acanthus leaves.

At the crossroads between the North-South (main road) and East-West axes, there are Tetrapylons marking the four corners of the intersection, which combine Greek inscriptions and Corinthian capitals with Umayyad embellishing techniques. The stonework in the walls is

> "There are here ruins of enormous stone buildings. It lies a long mile south of Baalbakk. At Ain al-Jarr [Anjar] begins the great river that flows through the Bikaah, called the Litany."
>
> Abu l-Fida, 14th century

quite impressive with a layer of large cut blocks and several layers of brick. At the end of the main road stands what is left of the Great Palace. One wall and several arcades of the southern part of the Palace have been reconstructed. The Palace was rectangular and had 2 gates, the East Gate and the West Gate. These entrances are rectangular with doors leading to a 40 m^2 open courtyard.

View toward the center of the city



Surroundings

In the centre of the village of **Majdal Anjar** (3 km south of Anjar) stands a very charming mosque built in the Ayyubid era. This small medieval town and its mosque were a mandatory stop on the road linking the Bekaa to Damascus.

Approximately 23 km from Anjar, the marshes of **Amiq** (Lebanon's largest wetland) are all that remains of a network of lakes and marshes that once covered a vast expanse of the plain, and in the winter still serve as an important stop for migratory birds en route between Europe and Africa, sheltering rare and protected species. This area is also used for irrigation and as grazing for the region's cattle during the dry season, usually between August and November. The site is popular with hunters, fishermen and nature-lovers.

The area is known for its vineyards and there are many wineries on the way to Anjar.

Chtoura is located around 44 kilometers east of Beirut on an ancient highway used since the Roman era. Wine-making has long been a popular activity in this area and today Chtoura is home to many wineries such as Ksara, Domaine des Tourelles, Massaya, Nakad, etc.



Harvesting grapes

Amiq





Plain of Beqaa



Kferaya vineyards

Nabaa Anjar and **Nabaa Shamessen** (Nabaa = water spring) are tributaries of the Litani River. Located further south, they are bordered by a marsh and are considered a protected area by the Society for the Protection of Nature in Lebanon (SPNL). It is a bird sanctuary for endangered species (Syrian Serin), a meeting-point for African Eurasian Waterbirds, and home to the common otter.

The charming village of Khirbet Qanafar, around 30 km south-west of Anjar, in the Beqaa stands on the eastern slopes of Mount Lebanon. It has Roman tombs and a medieval shrine of Sheikh Mosafer venerated by Muslims and Druze. Two watermills in the plains around the village date from the Ottoman era and must be visited.

Anjar is famous for its apple orchards (more than 500 orchards in the area) and its government-sponsored trout farm where you can learn about the fish-farming process from egg to fish. It is best to visit Anjar between August and late October during the harvest season. Visits to local farms can be booked in advance and farmers will be explaining apple-picking, tree-planting and irrigation.



Arabic dessert made of phillo sheets, filled with nuts, fried then dipped in sugar syrup

Gastronomy

There are many nice restaurants scattered along the small river of Anjar. The area is also known for several dishes such as Hrisseh, mainly prepared for the Feast of the Holy Cross. It is a slowly cooked wheat and meat stew. For the Feast, it is prepared in 40 giant outdoor pots to symbolize the heroic 40 days of resistance of Moussa Dagh. Mhammara is one of its Armenian specialties and a must-try. It consists of red pepper puree, breadcrumbs and several other spices.



Raw meat kebbeh



Sfouf

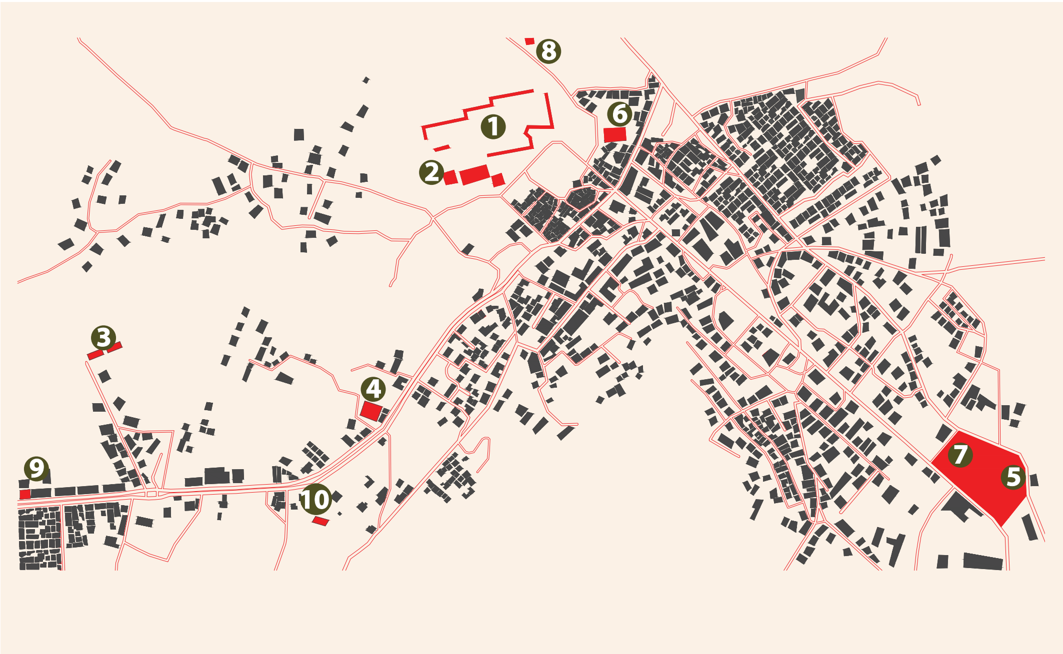


Feast/Festival

The Anjar festival was held for the first time in 2014. It was an experiment that will hopefully become a tradition along the same lines as other summer festivals in Lebanon such as those held in Baalbek, Byblos, Tyre, Beit el-Din and others.



Baalbek



1. Heliopolis
2. Al-Barbara Mosque (Goldsmiths)
3. Old train station
4. The Shrine of Al Sayyida Khawla
5. Ras al-Imam al-Hussein Mosque
6. The Umayyad Mosque
7. Ras el-Ain Spring
8. Qubbat al-Saadayn
9. Qubbat Douris
10. Quarries

Baalbek is a major city in the northern Beqaa valley, approximately 85 kilometers inland from Beirut. Known as Heliopolis in Roman times, it is best-known for its large temple complex. The six standing columns from the peristyle of the temple of Jupiter have become the iconic image of cultural tourism in Lebanon. The original temple complex had four monumental temples, those of Jupiter, Bacchus, Venus and Mercury; the last of which has been lost. It also had an enormous propylaea (monumental gateway) and vast courtyards. The ruins of Heliopolis are a UNESCO World heritage site.

The temple of Jupiter



Baalbek has been occupied by a succession of different civilizations. Recent excavation dates some of its finds to the Bronze Age and the Romans were attracted by its geographic location at the end of a line of cities in the eastern Mediterranean, which were caravan stops on the commercial routes from Central Asia, India and China, including Palmyra in Syria. The city was also important for the successive Muslim dynasties that ruled the eastern Mediterranean and in particular for the Umayyads, the Ayyubids and the Mamluks.



Entrance to the temple of Bacchus. Engraving by David Roberts (19th century)



The temple of Venus

Visits

Over the first three centuries AD the Romans constructed the Baalbek temples. Although today the temples have lost much of their original majestic monumentality, the remains testify to the grandeur of these Roman architectural complexes.

They are clustered together in three major complexes: the temple of Jupiter, the temple of Bacchus and the temple of Venus. The temple of Mercury has disappeared almost entirely, except for a restored stairway.



The temple of Jupiter

The complex of the temple of Jupiter

The complex includes a *propylaea*, a hexagonal forecourt, a large rectangular courtyard, an altar, a tower, a ritual pool and the temple of Jupiter.

This complex is reached through a monumental, partially restored stairway which leads to the *propylaea* whose façade once had a colonnade of 12 granite columns. The *propylaea* is featured in a lithograph print by the artist-traveler David Roberts showing one of its massive flat arches above one of its doors. The rear of the propylaea has three doors which give onto the hexagonal forecourt. It has four rectilinear exedras. It is believed that in the time of Byzantine Emperor Theodosius (379-395 AD) the court was covered with a dome and transformed into a church. The exedras had 30 granite columns *in antis*.

The forecourt leads into the Great Court, constructed in the second century AD. It is 134 meters long and 112 meters wide, and was the site of major ritual events. On three of its sides it had three porticos with three colonnades, with eighty Egyptian granite columns, eight of which were later transported to Constantinople to be used in the Cathedral of Hagia Sophia (537 AD). Behind the porticos there were alternating semicircular and rectilinear exedrae.

Close to the stairs is the sacrificial Altar.

The temple of Jupiter

The stairs lead to the Temple of Jupiter, which stood on a 7 meter high platform. It measures 88 by 48 meters and was accessed via a monumental staircase. This temple is now in ruins, except for six of the columns of its peristyle (which totaled 54), which form the iconic subject of every visitor's photographs. Each column is 22 meters high and they are topped by the remains of the temple's entablature.





Cella of the temple of Bacchus

The complex of the temple of Bacchus

The temple of Bacchus stands on its own lower podium to the south of the temple of Jupiter. This temple was constructed in the second century AD, and it is the best preserved of all the Roman buildings in Baalbek. Its dedication to Bacchus, or other cults associated with him can be deduced from its carved decorative motifs of grapes and poppies and scenes from his life.

Another impressive stairway leads up to the temple podium.

The temple of Bacchus





The temple of Venus

The temple of Venus

The third temple, the temple of Venus, popularly known as the Round Temple, is located southeast of the Acropolis. It is smaller than the others and has a different floor-plan, with its circular *cella*, circular peristyle and concave recesses in the podium. Like the other temples, it stands on a platform, with a stairway leading up to the entrance. It was constructed during the reign of Emperor Septimus Severus in the 3rd century AD, and in the early Byzantine period it was converted into a church dedicated to Saint Barbara.







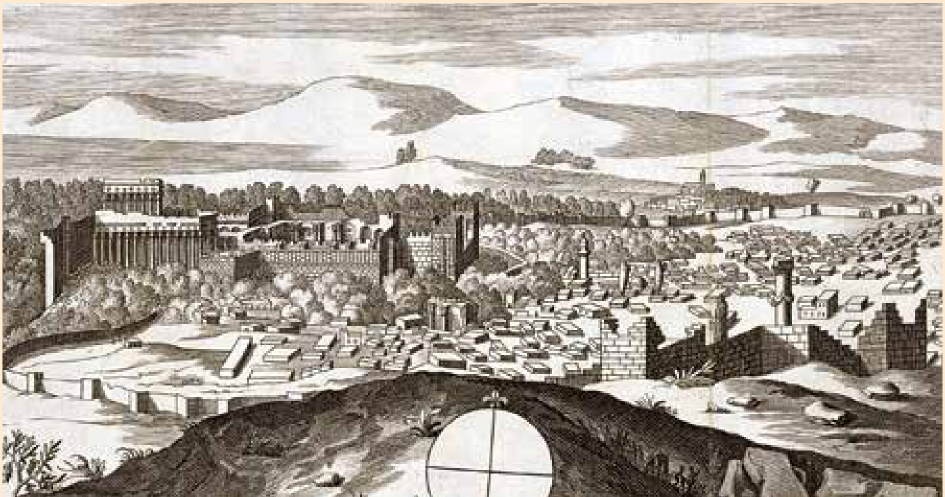
The Great Mosque

The Great Mosque

The Great Mosque was first constructed in the Umayyad period, and several of its walls still include the original lower courses of stones. It was constructed over the Byzantine church of St. John and was restored several times, particularly in the Zingid period in the 12th century, as can be seen from the use of pointed arches instead of the semicircular arches used in the Umayyad period. The Corinthian capitals on the columns inside the mosque were recycled from the Roman structures nearby. The mosque was also restored recently in 2002.

The Great Mosque





Baalbek in the 18th century

Baalbeck in the 10th century

"At Baalbek, in the Province of Damascus, in the district of Sanir, is the Temple of Baal. The ancient Greeks chose this piece of ground, lying between Jabal Lubnan (Lebanon) and the Jabal Sanir, for the building of their temple, as being a choice place for their idols. The temple consists of two edifices, one larger than the other; and in both of them are sculptures, most marvellously cut in the stone, such as you will not find the like of executed elsewhere, even in wood. For the height of the roof, the hugeness of the stones, the length of the columns, and the breadth of the porticos, are not more wonderful than is the building as a whole."

Mas'udi

"Beyond the borders of Damascus is Baalbek, situated on an eminence. Here are the gates of palaces, sculptured in marble; and lofty columns, also of marble. In the whole region of Syria, there is not a more stupendous or considerable edifice than this."

Ibn Hawqal



"Stone of the pregnant woman", quarries of Baalbek

In the cliff overlooking the city, there is a **necropolis** that dates back to the Roman and Byzantine periods. The remains of **Roman baths** were also found in the city in the Boustan al-Khan area, to the south of the temple complexes, along with a market and what was probably a *bouleuterion*, or assembly house.

Baalbek is also known for its **quarries**. They became famous because of the enormous block of stone lying on its side which is popularly known as the "stone of the pregnant woman." It is 21.5 meters long, 4 meters wide and 4.2 meters deep.

In addition to various severe earthquakes the Roman complexes at Baalbek have also suffered substantial structural alterations over the course of history (Byzantine, Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, Ayyubid and

The arrival of Ibn Battuta to Baalbek, 14th century

"We came next to the town of Baalbek, an old town and one of the finest in Syria, rivalling Damascus in its innumerable amenities. No other district has such an abundance of cherries, and many kinds of sweet-meats are manufactured in it, as well as textiles, and wooden vessels and spoons that cannot be equalled elsewhere."

Muses temple





Qubbat Douris, 13th century

Mamluk periods). In the 11th and 12th century they were used above all as fortifications to defend the city and the surrounding plains. Some military structures were added in the Ayyubid period to the west of the temple of Bacchus, and the whole group of buildings became known as the "Citadel", a term still in use today to

Ras al-Imam al-Hussein Mosque





The Citadel, ayyubid constructions.

describe the ruins of Baalbek. Other additions to the east of the Temple of Bacchus still show an entrance to a building, used now as the site museum, with Mamluk *muqarnas* and geometric star and polygon patterns.

Within the city of Baalbek itself, there are scattered remains from all the historical periods. Remains of the city gate for example can be seen northwest of the Roman complexes, together with the fortified city walls, originally constructed in Roman times, and reinforced and renovated in the Ayyubid and later periods. A 15th century two-room mausoleum, known as **Qubbat as-Saadin** (the Cupola of the Monkeys) was the last resting-place of a local Mamluk governor.

Impression of Baalbek in J.S. Buckingham, 1816

"The enormity of scale, and the magnificence of design, seen throughout the whole of the architecture, with the boldness of the drawing, and the exquisite finish of the sculpture, impressed me with an idea of a labour more than human. I should conceive, that in no country was to be found so superb a monument of the inimitable perfection of ancient architecture. The temples and the tombs of Egypt were here equalled in the enormity of the masses that composed them, and the chamber of the pyramids rivalled in the closeness of the masonry; while the monuments of Athens itself, in the age of Pericles and Praxiteles, were, at least, equalled in the richness and beauty of the sculptured ornaments that adorned them. I appear to me, that the temples of Edfou, Tentyris, and Thebes, fell far short of this, as a whole; for here the ponderous strength of the Egyptian, and the chastened elegance of the Grecian school, are both most happily combined."

Baalbeck. Engraving by David Roberts (19th century)





Qubbat as-Saadin, 15th century

The remains of a mausoleum known as **Qubbat al-Amjad** can be seen on Sheikh Abdallah Hill. This mausoleum was constructed for the Ayyubid governor of the city, al-Amjad, a descendent of the family of Saladin.

Several buildings were constructed during the Ottoman period, including the **House of Ibrahim Haidar**. This traditional Ottoman house, built by Ibrahim Bek Haidar, now belongs to the General Directorate of Antiquities.



The Shirine of al Sayyida Khawla

Two churches were built in this area in the early 20th century, the **Orthodox church of St George** and the **Maronite church** dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

One of the major attractions of the city is the **Palmyra Hotel.** It is a 20th century building constructed on the site of the Roman theatre. Massive stones from the theatre are still visible in the northern wall of the hotel which faces the main street.

The city of Baalbek is blessed with a natural spring called Ras El-Ain which has provided drinking water for the city since ancient times. Near the spring there are traces of a Roman shrine and a Nymphaeum, as well as the remains of a Mamluk mosque built in 1277 AD.

Gastronomy

Baalbek is known for its small meat-only pizza, known as *Sfiha*, which is on sale in several bakeries in town. Homemade products are also available such as *koshk*, a granulated dry material made from cracked wheat dough and yogurt.

Baalbek International Festival

The Baalbek International Festival was launched in 1956. Soon the Festival became an annual highlight on the calendar every summer, gaining an international reputation and attracting big names on the music, theatre and dance scenes.

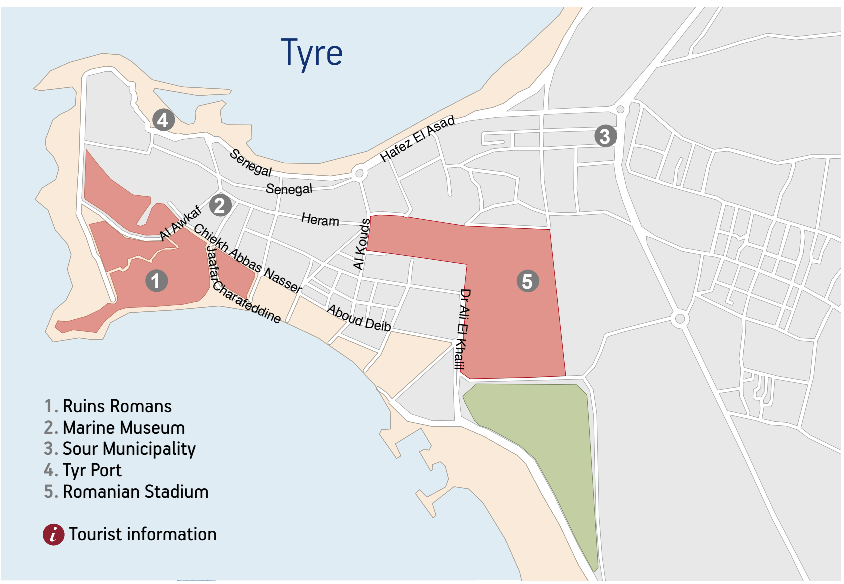
Amidst the magnificent ruins of the temples of Bacchus and Jupiter, the Baalbek International Festival has enchanted generations with world class plays, Lebanese nights, operas, music concerts (classical music, pop, jazz and more), and dance (modern, classical and folkloric). Over the years this incredible historical setting has witnessed world premieres and exceptional performances. Today, the Baalbek International Festival continues to showcase the arts, project a positive image of Lebanon to the world and work towards a better country through the power of culture and tourism.

Making its home in Baalbek in the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon, the Baalbek International Festival boasts a truly unique setting. Steeped in history, Baalbek (known in ancient times as “Heliopolis”, the City of the Sun), is a wonder to behold. The temples are not only the largest Roman temples ever built, but are also among the best preserved in the world.

Sidon and Tyre *(Saida and Sour)*



1. Al-Bahr Citadel
2. Khan Al-Franj
3. Bab al Serail Mosque
4. Abou Nakhleh Mosque
5. Al-Kikhia Mosque
6. Hammam Al-Sheikh
7. Hammam Al-Ward
8. Mar Elias Maronite Church
9. Al-Baar Citadel
10. Emir Fakhreddine Palace
11. Dabane Palace
12. Saida Municipality
13. Saida Courts



1. Ruins Romans
2. Marine Museum
3. Sour Municipality
4. Tyr Port
5. Romanian Stadium

Tourist information

Sidon and Tyre are two of the most ancient cities on the Lebanese coast. Tyre is approximately 49 kilometers south of Sidon. During the Crusader and the subsequent Mamluk and Ottoman periods – the two cities were overshadowed by the province of Acre (Akka) in Palestine.

Sidon has been an important city since ancient times because of its port and its agricultural hinterland, such that locals claim that it has one foot in the sea and the other on the land. Its hinterland and its ancient roads include many bridges and monuments that are a "must see" in the Umayyad itinerary.

Port of Sidon



Tyre may have been the place from which the early Phoenicians set sail for Carthage, in modern-day Tunisia. Murex sea snails were discovered on its shores. A purple dye known as Tyrian purple was extracted from these snails and became the royal color, so adding to the fame of Tyre. It also appears in Greek mythology as the place from which Europa was abducted by Zeus. Sidon meanwhile is mentioned in the Gospel of St. Mark in the New Testament.

Both cities thrived in the Hellenistic and Roman periods. The well-known Hellenistic sarcophagus known as the Alexander Sarcophagus comes from the area of Sidon and is now in the Archaeological Museum in Istanbul. Other important archaeological finds are in the National Museum in Beirut.

Tyre is home to the largest Roman hippodrome in the Eastern Mediterranean. Its maritime role revived in the first half of the eighth century in the Umayyad period, due above all to an increase in shipbuilding. In the Fatimid period (10^{th}-12^{th} centuries AD), it was home to a royal mint in which dinars (gold) and dirhams (silver)



Alexander Sarcophagus (Royal Necropolis of Sidon, 4^{th} century BC). Istambul's archaeological museum



The Sea Citadel, Sidon

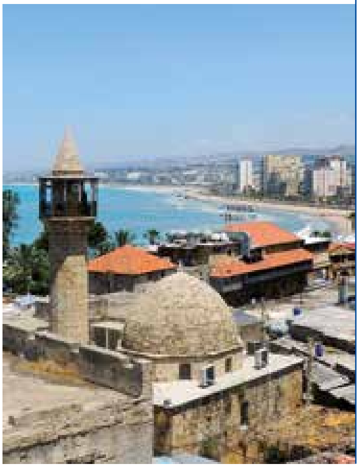


Hippodrome, Tyre

were minted. This suggests that it had an important economic role.

The two cities have vast, sandy beaches and busy fishing harbours. The Al Baqaa Fishermen Cooperative Housing Complex in Tyre, a recent development on the outskirts of the city designed by Lebanese architect Hashim Sarkis, won the Agha Khan Award for architecture. Local tourism in these cities is thriving on the back of excellent food and beautiful beaches. Sarafand, halfway between the two has many good restaurants.

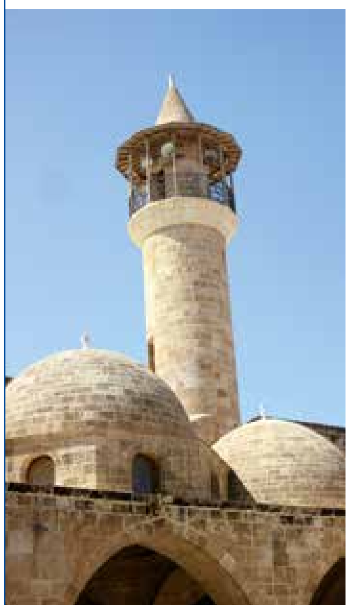
Barani mosque, Sidon and Funerary Chapel, Tyre







Omari Mosque



Visits

SIDON, a charming town on the south coast of Lebanon, is very rich in Muslim culture. Its old city is a living museum with a fascinating mixture of Crusader, Mamluk and Ottoman buildings. One of Sidon's best-known monuments is the Omari mosque, a Mamluk structure with later restorations and additions in the Ottoman period. It was built in sandstone on top of a Crusader refectory, and was damaged several times in the 19th and 20th century. It was restored in 1986 with a grant from the Agha Khan programme. It has an open courtyard that may once have had a fountain in the middle and porticos with pointed arches on its southern and eastern sides. The eastern portico is roofed with cross vaults and the southern one has three domed bays. A rectangular prayer hall extends beyond the southern portico.



The Sea Citadel

The Sea Citadel

Constructed on an island just offshore, the citadel has been there since the city existed. However, its architecture dates from the Crusader and Mamluk periods. It features heavy masonry, pointed arches and cross vaults and is connected to the city via a causeway. The Crusader phase was constructed in 1228 AD and the Mamluk phase dates from the 13th and 14th centuries.



Khan el Frenj

Another major attraction in the city of Sidon is Khan el Frenj (or the European guesthouse), built in the 17th century during the reign of Emir Fakheddine II. It is near the sea and consists of two storeys of rooms around an enormous courtyard. The rooms on the lower floor were used by merchants to store their goods and conduct wholesale transactions, while those on the upper level were for lodgings. The merchants, who were mostly Europeans, sailed from Europe to the port of Sidon. The *khan* has a picturesque interior and is constructed with stone and features pointed arches in the entrances and arcades. It was recently renovated and is used as a cultural centre for a range of activities.



Khan el Frenj







Bahaa el-Dine and al-Kikhiya mosques, Sidon

The old city, which is made up of markets, narrow streets and houses, has many other small attractions worth visiting such as the Fakhreddine Palace (17th century), Khan al-Ruz (17th century), Qalaat al-Muiz (originally in the 10th century), Riad al-Solh Palace (late 19th century), al-Kikhiya Mosque (17th century) and Kittaneh Villa (19th century) among others.

Riad al-Solh Palace





Hippodrome

TYRE, a UNESCO World Heritage city, is known worldwide for its Phoenician, Greek and Roman ruins including the racecourse, one of the largest in the Roman world.

Visitors to Tyre must not miss the Roman monuments at the al-Bass archaeological site. The city also boasts a number of medieval monuments including the small churches built on the *spina* of the hippodrome in the 6^{th} century AD and reused until the Crusader period. This enormous archaeological site also has a glass-makers district where glaziers plied their trade from the 7^{th} century onwards. Another medieval monument is the great Crusader Cathedral built in the 12^{th} century where the King of Jerusalem Frederik Barbarossa was crowned.

Tyre, description of Ibn Hawqal. 10th century

"Sour (Tyre) is a very strong town, situated on the seashore. It is the most ancient of all the cities on the coast; and all the Grecian philosophers came from this place."

The mountains of Lebanon, according to Ibn Battuta. 14th century

"These are among the most fertile mountains on earth, with all sorts of fruits and springs of water and shady coverts. There are always large numbers of devotees and ascetics to be found in these mountains and I saw a company of anchorites there."

Landscape of the surroundings of Tyre. Tebnine castle





Byzantine Road

Al-Bass Archaeological Site

This is the historic heart of the city and is bordered on one side by a large necropolis. The buildings date from both the Roman and Byzantine periods between the 2nd and 6th centuries. The site includes a monumental three-bay arch and one of the largest, best-preserved Roman hippodromes. It is built in a U shape, measures 480 meters by 160 meters and could accommodate a large number of spectators.

The Necropolis has a large number of sarcophagi and tombs dating back to the Roman period. They were re-used many times afterwards throughout the Byzantine period.



Necropolis

The complex of the church with garden has a main semi-circular room with marble floors, in addition to a garden and many tombs. It has a complex water supply system to irrigate the garden, which was probably built in the 3rd century AD and used throughout the Byzantine period.

Other small adjacent attractions in the same area include the Arcade Tomb which has a rectangular structure and is decorated with an arcade; the Columbarium, built on three levels with four burial cells each, in use from the 2nd to the 4th century AD; the Funerary Chapel from the 6th century AD, which has a small courtyard with a fountain. The interior walls and floors were once covered with marble; the Mosaic Tomb, so called because of the mosaics from the Byzantine period; the 20 meter high Monumental Arch, constructed in the 2nd century AD, and recently rebuilt; the Roman Road, which is paved with large limestone blocks on which the imprints of chariot wheels can still be seen, and bordered on both sides by a Doric colonnade; the Pedestrian street on the southern side of the Roman Road, which still preserves its Byzantine paving and was originally flanked by a row of shops, remains of which were discovered under the arches of the aqueduct.



Columbarium and Roman Road



The sanctuary of Heracles in Tyre by Herodotus, 5th century BC

"I sailed also to Tyre of Phoenicia because I heard that in that place there was a holy sanctuary of Heracles. And I saw a sanctuary richly equipped with many other dedications, and in it were two plaques, one of pure gold, the other of an emerald so large that it made the nights shine. I talked with the priests of the god there and asked how long ago the sanctuary was founded. And I found that not even they agreed with the Greeks. For they said that the god's sanctuary was founded when Tyre was founded, and 2,300 years had passed from when Tyre was founded. I saw in Tyre also another sanctuary of Heracles, and he had the epithet 'Thasian'."



The Great Arch

An Aqueduct runs along the left-hand side of the Roman Road and carried water from the springs of Ras el-'Ain, 6 km south of Tyre. A stretch of almost 200 meters of the foundations survive.

Aqueduct



The remains of large glass making ovens are still visible in this area, dating back to the beginning of the Islamic period (7th century AD). Large blocks of green glass were found nearby.

The arrival of Ibn Battuta in Tyre and Sidon, 14th century

"It is this city of Tyre which has become proverbial for impregnability, because the sea surrounds it on three sides and it has two gates, one on the landward side and one to the sea. That on the landward side is protected by four outer walls each with breastworks, while the sea gate stands between two great towers. There is no more marvellous or more remarkable piece of masonry in the world than this, for the sea surrounds it on three sides and on the fourth there is a wall under which the ships pass and come to anchor. In former times an iron chain was stretched between the two towers to form a barrier, so that there was no way in or out until it was lowered. It was placed under the charge of guards and trustworthy agents, and none might enter or leave without their knowledge. Acre also had a harbour resembling it, but it admitted only small ships. From Tyre I went on to Saydá [Sidon], a pleasant town on the coast, and rich in fruit; it exports figs, raisins and olive oil to Cairo."





Crusader church

The Crusader church was first built during the Byzantine period when the hippodrome was abandoned. It continued to be used during the Crusader period when its walls were covered with paintings and inscriptions (shields, horses, boats, etc…).

Surroundings

Both cities, Sidon and Tyre, are open to the east and have wonderful natural attractions. To the east of Sidon lays the town of Maghdouché, a town known for its agriculture, especially the bitter oranges, grapes and other seasonal fruits.

Approximately 5 km from Sidon lies what was once a temple dedicated to Echmoun, the Phoenician god of healing, built in the 7^{th} century BC by the King of Sidon, Echmunazar II. It was used for 1,400 years, between the 7^{th} century BC and the 6^{th} century AD before being finally abandoned. It is one of the best-preserved Phoenician remains in the country.



Church of Virgin Mary. Maghdouché

Chhim, around 17 kilometres northeast of Sidon, is a charming site with mainly Roman ruins. Tombs containing oil lamps from the Umayyad era (the seventh and eighth centuries) found in the church and nearby are a testimony to the sporadic occupation of the site.

Jezzine is a mountain town famous for its abundant water supply and for being on the trade routes to Sidon since time immemorial. Its souk is definitely worth a visit.

Temple of Echmoun



Rashaya is located 85 kilometres from Sidon, in the Beqaa Valley on the south-western slope of Mount Hermon. It is well-known for its handicrafts and agricultural products. Visitors can wander through the souks and buy local products such as olives, fruit, honey and wild herbs.

The countryside east of Tyre is full of oranges, bananas and other fruits. In the midst of the orange groves about 13 km from Tyre lies the Mansouri – Orange House Project, which monitors and protects turtles and their eggs. Villages are dotted across the hills and plains east of the city. These include Qana, 13 km from Tyre, which is believed to be the village where Jesus performed his first miracle, turning water into wine. On a more sombre note, Qana was also the scene of many large-scale killings during Israeli incursions and has a memorial to remember all the victims.

Orange House Project





The Castle of Tebnine viewed from the village

Toron Castle, also named the Fortress of Tebnine, is in the village of Tebnine 28 km southeast of Tyre. The castle was built in 1105 by the Crusaders seeking to recapture Tyre from the Fatimids of Egypt. Saladin took the city in 1187, after a difficult battle. In 1229 the Egyptian Sultan al-Kamil (Saladin's brother) surrendered it to the Franks and more than thirty years later, in 1266 the Franks lost it to the Mamluks and were never able to recapture it. From the mid 17^{th} century to the 18^{th} century, the fortress was the scene of frequent clashes between the local Emirs on one side and the Ottomans on the other, after which it became the areas' administrative centre.

Fortress of Chqif Arnoun, also known as Beaufort Castle, is one of the most impressive Crusader forts. It is located around 40 kilometres north-east on Tyre, on top of a mountain overlooking the ancient



The castle of Tebnine

pass between Tyre and the Beqaa Valley through the Marjeyoun region. Built by the Crusaders in 1139 on the ruins of an ancient fort, it changed hands on numerous occasions before finally falling to the Mamluks in 1268. The Emir Fakhreddin Maan, the Great, strengthened its fortifications in the 17th century but these were destroyed by the Ottomans after his defeat. The fort has exceptional views over the Beqaa, Jabal el-Sheikh and the hinterland of Tyre.

Beaufort Castle





Fattoush salad

Gastronomy and handicraft

Sidon is a culinary destination where you can enjoy excellent citrus fruits and other regional specialties. Both Sidon and Tyre have an attractive variety of traditional Lebanese restaurants. Shawarma, foul (Fava beans) and falafel are well known in many small restaurants in the city, and they are a favourite with visitors. Cakes are also popular in Sidon, and many of its cake shops are known throughout Lebanon. Its classic desserts and pastries include *baklawa*, *seniora* and *jazariyya*.

A selection of seafood restaurants can be found along the coast road between Sidon and Tyre as well as in Tyre itself, offering a nice sea view and clean locally caught seafood.

Both cities have workshops that produce soap and blown glass, considered to be a continuation of old traditions and part of the historic identity of the two cities. The art of building ships “the Phoenician way” was passed down from generation to generation in the port of Tyre.

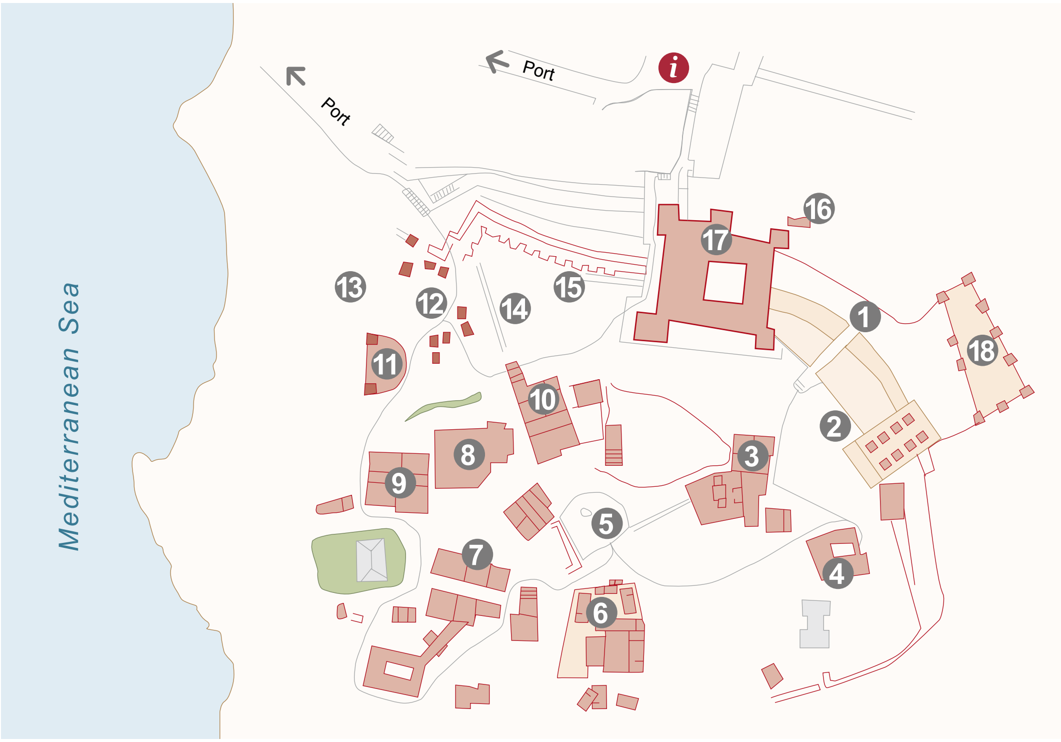
Festivals

The festival of Tyre is held every July and has become a major event in southern Lebanon. It attracts a large audience from around the country and it mainly showcases Middle Eastern cultures with performances of music, theatre and dance.



Festival of Tyre

Byblos *(Jbeil)*



1. Remains of city Gate
2. Primitive Wall
3. Temple
4. Temple of the Obelisks
5. Ayn el-Malik
6. Houses
7. Early Bronze Age Residence
8. The Amorite Quarry
9. Early Bronze Age House
10. Temple of Baalat Gebal
11. Roman Theater
12. Royal Tombs
13. Esplanade
14. Roman Colonnade
15. Ramparts
16. Roman Nympheum
17. Crusader's Castle
18. Persial Castle

i Tourist information

Byblos

The renowned city of Byblos (Jbeil) is approximately 37 km north of Beirut and has been inhabited since at least the Phoenician times. It wrote a glorious page in man's earliest history through its relations with the Egypt of the Pharaohs in the 3rd millennium BC. Byblos and its immediate surrounding area also appear in Greek mythology and ancient Mediterranean history. It is also known thanks to the dissemination of its alphabet. Like most of the Lebanese coastal cities, it has witnessed the rise and fall of many civilizations and dynasties from the Phoenicians to the modern period and the remains of Greek, Roman, Crusader and Ottoman buildings can still be seen today.





The city has an old town and new modern districts spread out around the old market. Even though it has archaeological sites from the Phoenician and Roman periods and a still standing Crusader church, the old town seems to have been shaped in the Ottoman period. Little remains of earlier Islamic periods in terms of

Bronze Age Houses



Overview of the archaeological site



Islamic Gates

artefacts, but the old town with its narrow streets and stone buildings is permeated with history. It has been a popular destination for archaeological expeditions since the 19th century, and with the economic surge in recent years, it is regaining a special aura, with summer festivals, long term renovation and restoration projects,





The Ottoman House

and the establishment of an important university (the Lebanese American University) just outside the city. The old city is a World Heritage Site, while its modern counterpart hosts businesses, a hospital, cultural centres, shopping malls, pubs and nightclubs, etc.

Roman Road



Byblos in 1816, as described by J.S. Buckingham

"[Byblos] is seated on a rising ground near the sea, at the foot of Lebanon which here approaches close to the coast. It is walled on three sides towards the land, and open on the west towards the sea, being perhaps in the whole about half a mile in circuit. Without the walls, before the only gate of entrance, are a number of coffee sheds and halting places, with a street bazar for the accommodation of those who may not wish to enter the town, or arrive or depart before and after sunset, when the gate is closed. Within the walls the chief building is an old castle, raised by modern repairs, and now used as the house of the Aga, whose whole force consists of about ten horse soldiers, twenty foot, and three small pieces of cannon. There are, besides, three or four other lofty and open buildings, appertaining to the chief people of the place, a mosque, with a low minaret, and a Maronite church, apparently of some antiquity, from its exterior form and good masonry. The rest of the houses in the town are but of poor construction, and nearly half the space within the walls is filled up by gardens for the use and pleasure of the inhabitants. The population is not estimated to be above 2,000 Mohammedans and Maronites.

Without the town are seen many large and beautiful columns of red and grey granite, with some sculptured blocks of marble, probably the wreck of the celebrated temple of Adonis, erected to him here on the spot of his nativity, as this Gebaal [mountain] is held to be the Byblus of the Greeks, and corresponds in situation from its vicinity to the river of Adonis already mentioned."

The Crusaders Castle





The Harbor

Visits

The old city of Byblos is perhaps surprising in that for all the city's role in the Mediterranean and inland throughout history, it has no grand monuments and it seems that the stones from its Roman buildings were recycled over the centuries. History however permeates its narrow streets, houses and market stalls. The harbour remains unspoilt, allowing visitors to imagine



The Great Temple



Temple of Obelisks

what it might have looked like when the first Phoenician ship sailed out to sea.

Byblos has many small historic buildings, which include the remains of the Phoenician Temple of Baalat Gebal, the Great Temple, a necropolis with nine underground tombs of the Kings of Byblos from the second millennium BC, the Roman theatre, from the 3rd century AD, the Roman colonnade, the fourth century Roman road

The Great Temple





Sultan Abd al-Majid Mosque



that once led to the Temple of Baalat-Gebal and was lined with colonnades, of which only 6 remain.

The fact that the city has been continuously inhabited since ancient times means that most of the remains of its early occupation are in fragments, and are densely woven into the fabric of today's city. Other interesting sights include the remains of the Bronze Age City Fortifications, the Temple of Obelisks, the Persian castle, the Roman road and Nympheum, the Crusader castle, which was built on top of a Fatimid fortress, in the 12th century, and the Medieval City Wall also built by the Crusaders. From the Mamluk/Ottoman period the small Mosque of Sultan Ibrahim Adham is still standing as is the Mosque of Sultan Abd al-Majid, which was renovated various times, most recently in 1783.



Church of St. John the Baptist

The Church of St. John the Baptist

This church was commissioned by Genovese Crusaders and built in 1115 over the remains of a Byzantine church. It was considered a cathedral and was partially destroyed during an earthquake in 1176 AD. Under Ottoman rule it became a Maronite church and was presented to the Maronites as a gift by Prince Youssef Chehab of Lebanon in the mid-1700s, after they helped him capture the city.

This church is a hybrid combination of Byzantine, Crusader and Islamic styles. It has a Basilica floor-plan with a vaulted ceiling. It has an impressive entrance and a small porch with a distinct chevron pattern on its arches, similar to that used on several buildings in Jerusalem from the same period. This pattern can also be seen in later decoration of Ayyubid and Mamluk buildings in the region.





Church of St. Charbe



Surroundings

The mountains and valleys west of Byblos are superb. Some of them are well-known because they are mentioned in Greek and Roman mythology, such as the valley of Adonis, where a Roman aqueduct attests to its importance. Approximately 14 kilometers from Byblos, Nahr Ibrahim, formerly known as Adonis River, is a rich source of legend. According to Greek and Phoenician mythology, Adonis, the God of Love and Beauty, was killed by a boar sent by Ares, the God of War. His blood flowed into the waters of the river, which was later named after him. Just off the seaside road, 6 kilometres south of Byblos, there is a 19th century Ottoman bridge that crosses the river. If you venture inland from this road, you will come to the Valley of the ancient Adonis River where Zoubeida's Roman aqueduct still stands. It was restored during the reign of the Emir Bashir Shehab (first half 19th century) and is suspended over the valley.

Near Maad, approximately 20 kilometres from Byblos, there is a 12th century church dedicated to Saint Charbel of Edessa, who converted and was martyred with his sister in the middle of the 3rd century AD. It is built on the foundations of a Byzantine church, itself constructed on the remains of a Roman temple. The church features Byzantine-style paintings dating back to the Crusaders, as well as the only Crusader tomb in Lebanon and some Roman artefacts found onsite.

River of Adonis, reported by J.S. Buckingham, year 1816

"We reached the Nahr el-Ibrahim of the Arabs, the ancient river of Adonis, so celebrated in classic story for the annual rites performed on its banks in memory of that favourite of Venus, who was fabled to have been killed by the boar he hunted in the mountains above. We observed here that the earth upon its shores was of a deep red colour, though the water was but now slightly tinged with it; yet after sudden floods the waters overflowing these banks might well become sufficiently red to induce the ancient worshippers of Venus to believe that the river became stained with the blood of her favourite, in sympathy for his death, more particularly as this is said by Lucian to have generally happened near the feast of Adonis, and naturally in the rainy season. We crossed this river by a large and lofty bridge of a single arch, and observed that the stream which flowed beneath was broader and more deep and rapid than other river we had yet seen in Palestine or Syria, not excepting the Jordan itself, which is esteemed the principal."

Nahr Ibrahim Old bridge over the Nahr Ibrahim river



40 kilometres east of Byblos the area of Afqa is home to a well-known temple devoted to Adonis and Astarte, destroyed in the 4th century on the orders of Emperor Constantine, only to become a Christian pilgrimage site over the centuries, dedicated to the Virgin Mary.

The road through the hinterland of Jbeil towards Mnaïtra brings us to Yanouh, around 30 kilometres east of Byblos. This peaceful village has a very tumultuous history, evidenced by its various ruins. Bronze Age remains at the Kharayeb Archaeological site were only uncovered in the Ottoman period. On the main road there is a Roman temple that was abandoned when the Empire crumbled. A Christian basilica at its side was founded at the beginning of the Early Byzantine period. In the 12th century, Yanouh became the seat of the Maronite Patriarchate and the Roman temple was transformed into a church, hence its name "Saint George the Blue." There are ten churches in the vicinity of the temple, a sign of a glorious, prosperous past.

Mnaitra, which is seven kilometers south of Yanouh, houses the ruins of a medieval fortress called El Hoson. This fortress controlled a natural path linking Mnaitra to the Bekaa, which is why it was highly disputed by the Arabs and the Crusaders, the first of whom was the Count of Tripoli in 1176. Visitors can admire the various Hellenistic, Roman and Crusader ruins on the site.



Yanouh



The Harbor

Gastronomy and handicraft

Like all cities on the Lebanese coast, Byblos is known for its seafood. Approximately 9 kilometres from Byblos, the town of Amchit is known for its basketry and palm leaves. The “Mwarra’a” dessert at the “Forn al Sabaya” bakery is still made with traditional phyllo sheets filled with nuts and flavoured with orange blossom water. Once in Amchit, don’t miss the town’s winding streets bordered by the 19th century houses of silk merchants and very old churches, built with Roman remains.

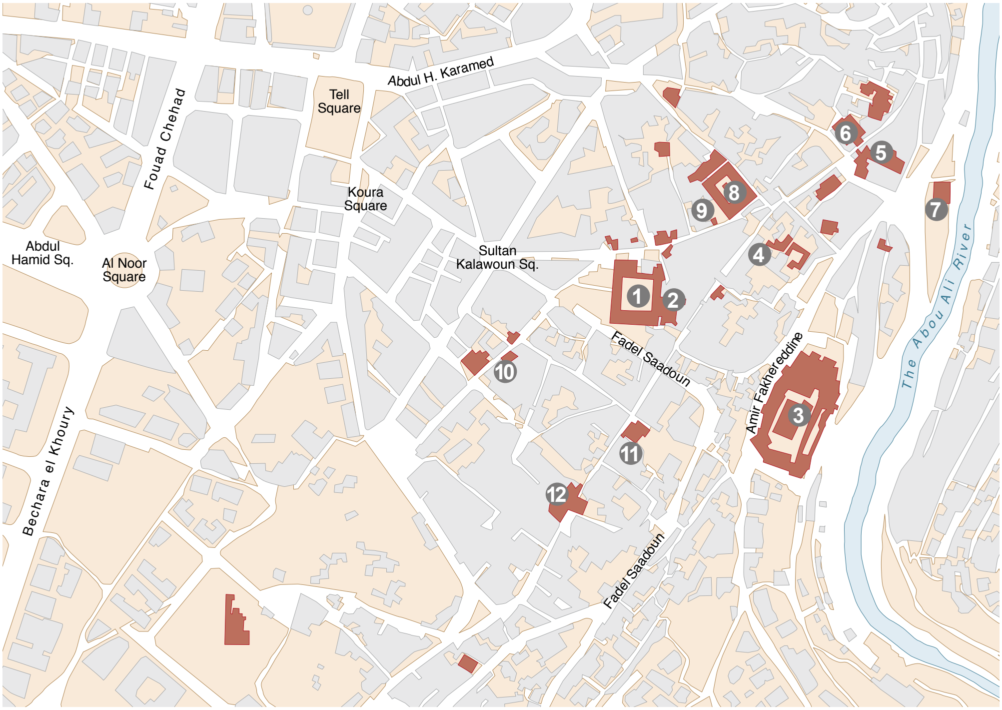
Feasts

Byblos is known for its International Summer Festival, which is held on the beach between July and August. The Byblos festival hosts many stars in different performing arts.



Roman Theater, Byblos

Tripoli *(Trablous)*

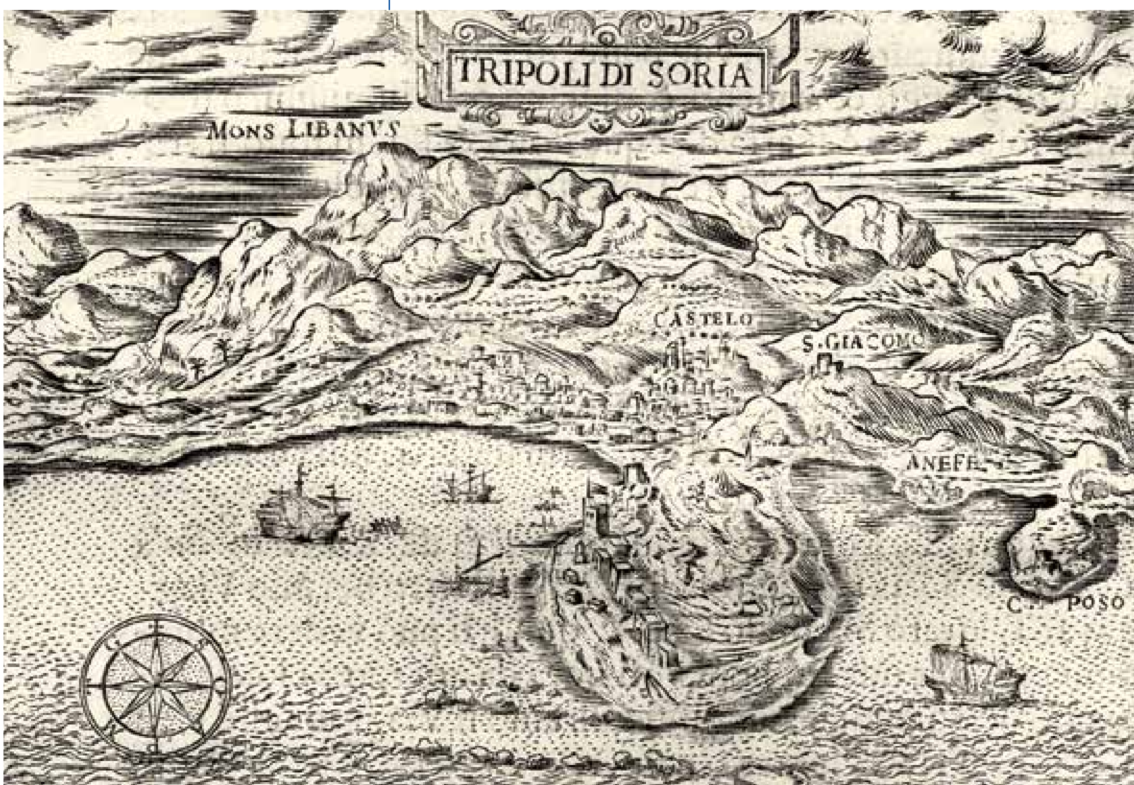


1. Al-Mansurí Mosque Complex
2. Al-Qartawiyya Madrassa
3. Citadel Saint-Gilles
4. Al-Uwaysiyat Mosque
5. Khan al-Khaiyatine
6. Al-Misriyyin Caravan saray
7. Al-Bourtasi Mosque
8. Khan al-Saboun
9. Al-Tuwashiyat Madrassa
10. Al-Khatouriyat Madrassa
11. Al-Tahham Mosque
12. Hamman al-Jalid

The northern city of Tripoli has had a rich history since its foundation. It is 85 kilometres north of Beirut and its best-preserved monuments date from the Middle Ages. It is one of the most ancient coastal settlements in Lebanon and has been continuously inhabited since at least the Phoenician era. Its strategic location on the Mediterranean coast made it a natural seaport for Syria, especially for the city of Homs. Tripoli's architectural remains attest to its long history, with peaks and troughs according to the different empires that dominated the coast.

In the wake of the Arab Muslim conquest in 635 AD, the city became one of the main Umayyad naval

Tripoli in 1630





Panoramic view of Tripoli

towns. It is said to have gained importance in the early Umayyad period because of its proximity to the island of Cyprus, which the Umayyads wished to conquer. In the Fatimid era, in the mid 11th century, it acquired a degree of independence under the Banu Amar. It developed a reputation as a prosperous city and a city of letters, due to the creation of the "Dar al-Ilm" (house of knowledge) library. Under the Crusaders, Tripoli was the capital of a county of the same name. It continued so until 1289 when it was conquered by the Mamluks. Under the Mamluks, it prospered once



again and several buildings were constructed, including mosques, *madrasas* (schools), *khans* and public baths. Tripoli played an important role in the economy during the Crusader and Mamluk era. It had a coin minting workshop of great importance during the Crusader era, which remained in production under the Mamluk Sultans, when the coins were legal tender throughout Syria. Its role as a launch pad for campaigns in the Mediterranean declined, but the city remained an important "thaghr," a defensive port city, right up until the Lebanese independence in the mid-twentieth century. During the Mamluk, Ottoman and the French Mandate periods the city thrived in economic terms and expanded.

Madrasa al-Burtasiya and Tripoli Citadel





Al-Burtasiya Mosque and Madrassa



Visits

The city is divided into two major sections, “al-Mina” and “al-Madina”. Al-Mina is the part nearest the sea, which has been inhabited since the Phoenicians, while al-Madina is the medieval city that stretches along the Abou Ali River, which rises in the mountains covered by Lebanon’s famous cedar forest.

In the old town there are numerous religious and civic buildings in the Mamluk, Ottoman and French Mandate architectural styles, including mosques, *khans* (commercial lodgings), *hammams* (public baths), *souks* (markets), residential buildings and *madrasas* (schools), such as Qartawiyya, al-Nouriyya, al-Nasiriyya, al-Khayriyya Hassan, al-Qadiriyya, al-Burtasiya, al-Saqraqiyah, al-Khatouniyya...



Al-Mansuri Mosque



Some of the mosques are still used by the people of Tripoli, including the al-Mansuri, Taynal, Abd al-Wahed al-Makansi, al-'Attar, al-Tawbah and Arghun Shah Mosques. The Mamluk Sultan al-Mansur Qalawun ordered the construction of the **al-Mansuri Mosque** in year 1294, after he conquered the city from the Crusaders. The mosque, the oldest one in the city, was built over a period of two decades, and was subsequently restored on various occasions. It has a number of typical Mamluk features including the *ablaq* (alternating colors in the courses of stones) and *muqarnas* (stalactite-like ceilings). The largest Crusader fortress in Lebanon, the Citadel of Raymond de Saint-Gilles is also in Tripoli.

Al-Mansuri Mosque





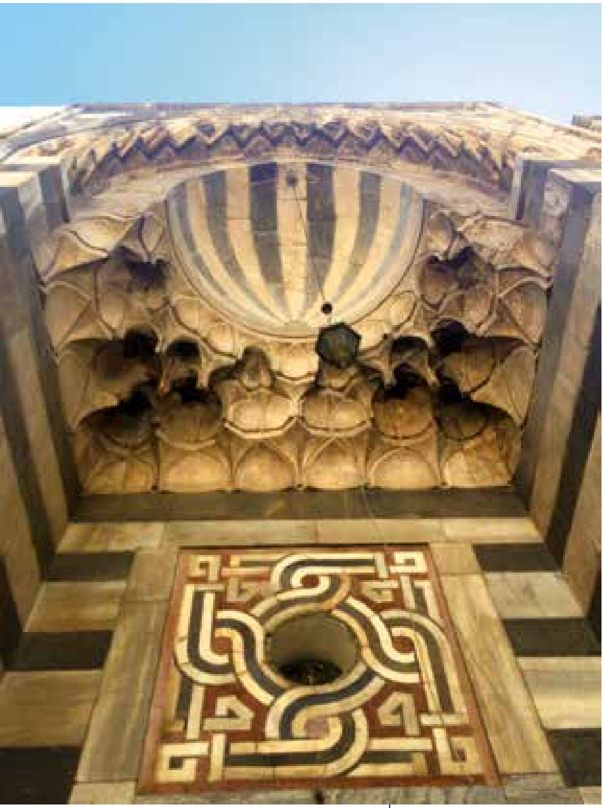


The Taynal Mosque was built by the Mamluk governor of Tripoli Saif al-Din Taynal in 1336 on the site of a 12th century Carmelite Crusader Church. It is one of the best-preserved Mamluk buildings. Some architectural features from the earlier church are still visible in the mosque, including a partially preserved nave. The mosque includes some of the best coloured-marble inlay decoration in Mamluk architecture, in addition to *ablaq* patterns and *muqarna* semi-domes above its *mihrab* and entrance. The alternating courses of stone are in black and buff. This colour scheme is also used in Aleppo, as opposed to the red and buff colours used in Cairo. This is due to Tripoli's proximity to the

The Taynal Mosque

The Taynal Mosque







Al-Qartawiya Madrasa (left) and Abd al-Wahed Mosque (right)

cities of Northern Syria. The mosque also has pointed arches, a typical feature of Mamluk architecture. The stonework on the walls of the mosque has aspects of both Crusader and Mamluk styles.

Mamluk army generals who served in Tripoli also built several foundations including *madrasas* (religious schools), such as the exquisite Burtasiyya madrasa (1310) and the al-Qartawiyya madrasa (1316-1326). Mosques were also constructed. These include the Abd al-Wahed Mosque (1305-06), the al-'Attar Mosque (1330), which has the tallest minaret from the Mamluk

Description of Tripoli by Ibn Hawqal, 10th century

"Tripoli is a town on the shore of the Sea of Roum, well-inhabited, and abounding in dates. The chief town of this district is Emessa, a place well-supplied with provisions, and excellent air. The inhabitants are celebrated as being handsome. Neither scorpions nor serpents are found here. It is copiously watered; the lands are cultivated, and there are many trees. There is also a church, to which there is not, in size, any church like it in all of Syria: one half of this building is a church; the other, a mosque. The streets here are paved with stone."

Tripoli in the 14th century, according to Ibn Battuta

"Tripoli is one of the principal towns in Syria. It lies two miles inland and has only recently been built. The old town was right on the shore; the Christians held it for a time, and when it was recovered by Sultan Baybars it was pulled down and this new town built. There are some fine bath-houses in it, one of which is called after Sindamur, who was a former governor of the city."

Hamman al-Jadid and Souk al-Khaiyatine





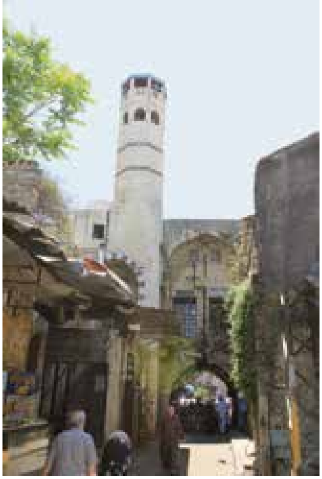


Khan al-Saboun

period as well as a finely carved *muqarna* vault at the entrance; the Arghun Shah Mosque (14th century) and the al-Mu'allaq Mosque (16th century).

The port of Tripoli remained active in the Mamluk and Ottoman periods, forming a link between the Mediterranean and the interior. Many *khans* were constructed during this period of which various survive:

Al-Mu'allaq Mosque and Souk al Haraj









Khan al-Askar (end 13th century), Khan al-Khaiyatine (14th century), Khan al-Saboun (15th century) and Souk al Haraj.

Various *Hammams* (public baths) also survive, such as Hammam al-Nouri (1333), Hammam Izz al-Din and Hammam al-Jadid (1730).

Hammam al-Nouri

Hammam Izz al-Din





Tripoli Citadel

The crusader citadel also survived to some extent. Built between 1103 and 1104 by the Crusader Raymond de Saint-Gilles, the Citadel of Saint-Gilles is the biggest in Lebanon. It was burned down during the Mamluk conquest of the city in 1297, and partially rebuilt the following century. It towers over the city and its most impressive feature is its imposing entrance with its moat and three gateways. Most of the interior was rearranged by the Mamluks. It was later restored by the Ottoman Sultan Suleiman the Magnificent in 1521.

Tripoli Citadel







El Mina

Modern Tripoli is a typical Mediterranean city with concrete residential buildings and two-way streets. It has a busy trading port and small fishing harbours. This area is called al-Mina (literally the harbour), where there are many restaurants and pubs. The old city by contrast maintains its medieval aura. Together with the *khans*, the souks form an agglomeration of various trades with tailors, jewellers, perfume-makers, tanners, woodworkers and soap makers.

The Corniche El-Mina is a long promenade along the seaside where one can enjoy a drink, a shisha and a nice walk. From there, you can take a stroll around the old city of El Mina.



Manshieh Park and Clock Tower

Palm Islands

The Palm Islands, a UNESCO protected site, are a strand of small islands off the coast of Tripoli. They are a haven for endangered loggerhead turtles and an important bird sanctuary. To get to the Islands, you should hire a small boat from the Corniche, and once there, you can enjoy bird watching, hiking, guided tours, snorkelling, swimming, diving and photography.

Tripoli is often described as “al-fayha’,” meaning “the fragrant one” due to the orange groves that once surrounded it. Unfortunately, with the urban expansion of the city, these are ever diminishing. Nevertheless, the city is only a short drive away from many natural attractions.





Church of St. John the Baptist on Mont Perelin, close to Tripoli

Mosques and churches in Tripoli in the year 1816, according to J.S. Buckingham

"There are in the town eleven mosques, chiefly having domes and minarets, and the largest of these is a very fine old building of the Saracenic order, with a court and fountain, and a number of old Arabic inscriptions. There are four Christian churches; two Greek, one Maronite, and one Latin in the convent of the Capuchins. The proportion of the population may be therefore judged from this; the Mohammedans being the most numerous, the Greek Christians next, and lastly the Catholics."

The environs of Tripoli according to J.S. Buckingham

"The environs of Tarabolus are chiefly laid out in gardens, in which the orange and lemon trees abound. A fine stream, called Nahr-el-Meloueea, comes from the south-east, and flowing at the foot of the hill behind the castle, passes by the dwellings on the north-eastern edge of the town, and discharges itself into the sea. Behind the castle in the valley is a coffee-house, visited as a place of recreation, to enjoy the sound of the water, the verdure, and the shade, and several other smaller ones are seated on its banks nearer the town."

Qannubin Valley



Surroundings

The town of Beddaoui is about 4 km from Tripoli. A small traditional workshop, where the art of glassblowing has continued uninterrupted since Phoenician times, is open for visits. Today, there are very few craftsmen that still practice this art. Glasses, vases, candleholders, bowls and ashtrays are available in a wide array of colours from violet to turquoise, green and yellow.



Deir Saydet el Balamand

Balamand is about 15 km from Tripoli. Balamand was formerly a monastery founded by Cistercian monks in 1157 and was known variously as Belmont, Bellimonte Ultra Mare, and Bellus-Mons. In the 17th century, the monastery came under the authority of the local Orthodox Church. It is situated on a hilltop overlooking the Mediterranean Sea to the west and the well-known Koura Olive Groves to the east. You can visit the monastery and the famous campus of Balamand University.

Anfe or Enfe peninsula is about 15 km from Tripoli. The ancient city was built along a rocky promontory in the Bronze Age. In the first centuries of Islam, it fell into decline only to resurge under the Crusaders. The Crusader castle of Nephin (Enfe), of which only the foundations remain, is located on a rocky plateau right on the shore. It was also the residence of the Counts

Deir Saydet el Balamand





Church of
St. Catherine, Enfe

of Tripoli. There are a few other sites worth visiting: the Byzantine church of Saydet al-Rih (Our Lady of the Wind), the Monastery of the Watchman (Deir el Natour) dating from the Crusader period and the Romanesque church of St. Catherine. Alternatively you can wander around the fishing docks, visit the remains of the Sea Fortress or walk the length of the bay to where the salt marshes lend a pretty note to the landscape. This city is well-known for the manufacture of salt.

Amioun is located about 12 kilometres south east of Enfe. The most outstanding monument in Amioun is undoubtedly the cliff called “al-Sheer” overlooking the main road. It has many cavities that are actually tombs from the Roman period. These cavities were probably reused in the medieval era. The cliff is dominated by a church built in the 19th century and dedicated to Saint John. The Cathedral of Mar Gerios el-Dahliz (Saint George of the Crypt) is an interesting monument to visit as it is a Roman temple converted into a church. Its apse dates from the Crusader Era, while the remaining structures are from Ottoman times. The Church of St. Phocas is also worth seeing. It dates from the time of the Crusaders and medieval frescoes still line its walls.

Wadi Kadisha and Wadi Qannubin is a valley about 18 km from Tripoli. Follow the Abou Ali River into the mountains to discover the sacred source of Qadisha,

"Holy" in Aramaic, and its valley, sometimes called the Holy Valley. You can also visit monasteries such as St. Anthony of Qozhaya, the Qannubin Monastery, Our Lady of Hawka and Mar Sarkis, all carved into the sides of the rocky hills of an abyss-like valley that has provided a safe haven for Christians since the 4th century AD.

Mseilha or Mussaylha in Hamat is about 20 km south from Tripoli. Just a couple of metres beyond the Chekka tunnel stands a castle on a rock, lit up with bright lights at night and almost invisible during the day, as it blends in against the mountain.



Bcharreh and Qannoubin valley



Qadisha valley

Deir Saydet al Nouriyye in Ras Chekka is about 5 km north from Mseilha. This popular pilgrimage site is situated on the edge of the 200-meter high cliff known as Ras Chekka. The original monastery dates back to the 6th century and is located below on the side of the cliff. The story goes that a long time ago, two sailors found themselves in peril. They began to pray. The Virgin appeared to them as a light and guided them gently to the shore. The grateful sailors carved a cave in the cliff dedicated to the Virgin Mary, and called the shrine "Our Lady of the Light". A bit further on, there is another church and monastery, dedicated to St. Simon, the view from which seems to stretch forever.

Gastronomy and Handicraft

The city of Tripoli is known as a centre for furniture making. Craftsmen in the market hand-carve attractive wooden pieces with various designs and patterns. Soap-making is another thriving craft. In Khan al-Saboun (the soap khan), you can still find soap pro-



Soap market



Sharkas soap maker in Old Tripoli

duced the old way with exclusively natural products. The traditional soap industry is one of the oldest in Tripoli. The main component of soap is the olive oil that comes from the olive groves located on the hills around the city. For years, many families had their own soap factories and produced handmade soap. Pottery is also popular in Tripoli and there are several pottery workshops in the al-Mina area.

Other crafts are plied in the villages around Tripoli. In the Beddaoui area, 4 km away from Tripoli, there is a glass workshop that produces a particular glass that is slightly opaque and sprinkled with tiny air bubbles, thus reviving an ancient forgotten technique, an art form that very few craftsmen today still continue.

Tripoli is known for its special seafood dishes including the “Samkeh Harra” (Chili fish) dish which is known throughout Lebanon. It consists of baked seabass topped with a special chili sauce, and is an excellent choice in Tripoli’s restaurants. “Moghrabieh” is also prepared well in the city. It is a traditional Lebanese dish made of small dough balls cooked with lamb shanks or chicken and lots of shallot onions. The city is most famous however for its desserts and pastries. The city’s specialty is “Halawet el Jeben” (cheese dessert), which consists of a cheese roll stuffed with cream and topped with orange blossom flavoured sugar syrup. It can be found in several pastry shops in the city, the most famous of which is al-Hallab. In the city’s old souks, the most popular dish is grilled “kaak” with cheese.

Notes